



WHICH EMAIL PLATFORM IS BEST FOR YOUR MARKETING NEEDS

CLOUD BASED, ON PREMISE MTA, OR HYBRID

Email is a high-performing, high ROI channel. The highest, in fact, if you can get it right. However, there is more to email than great content. The solution you use for sending your emails can also make a big difference when it comes to both performance and cost. on-premise MTA, Cloud-based email service, or hybrid solution - which is best for you? If you're not sure, our guide will give you all the information you need to know.

The two most popular email solutions currently are on-premise MTAs and cloud-based email relay services. However a third possibility – hybrid solutions, which enhance email options – are becoming increasingly popular. Here, we'll discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each, so that you can make an informed decision about which solution is best for you.

01

ON-PREMISE MTA

An on-premise MTA is the option for those who like control and don't mind the extra responsibility which comes with it. Essentially, an on-premise MTA is a fully client-controlled email system installed by the company at their own premises. They typically lack front-end management functions, but can be cost-effective for high-volume mailers.

THE PROS:

- + Greater control** - If you use an on-premise MTA, your business will have much greater control over email operations. Owning the software and infrastructure means that security, speed, and so on are all directly within your own remit. There is no need to rely on third party providers to fix bugs or solve downtime issues. Furthermore, an on-premise MTA provides a far deeper access to the workings of the system than could ever be had with a cloud-based service.
- + Improved dependability** - An on-premise MTA is as dependable as your business can make it. You can rely on your own, personal, self-owned system to work entirely for you and not to be hidebound by the caveats and prior commitments of a cloud-based server.
- + Increased security** - Security is becoming an increasingly important priority in this age of data protection. For this reason, many are turning to on-premise MTA systems. The localized nature of MTA storage means that data can be kept safe, and you have the ability to customize your security measures as intensively as you please.
- + Highly customizable** - The personal nature of on-premise MTA software makes it eminently customizable. If your business has the resources and the know-how, you can integrate CRMs, BI tools, extra security measures and so on.

- + **Reduced deploy delay** - Your on-premise MTA works for you and you alone, meaning that there is no virtual 'queue' of clients. Deploy delay is thus either eliminated or drastically reduced from what would otherwise be the case.
- + **Low price per-email** - While the initial outlay for an on-premise MTA system is steep, bulk mailers will see good ROI in time. The price per-email for MTAs compared to cloud systems is much lower, making it worth it over time for those who send millions of emails.

THE CONS:

- **High initial cost** - As with everything, purchasing materials and building your own infrastructure from scratch involves hefty initial outlay. MTA software licenses are upwards of \$4000, rising to \$6000 when setup costs are factored in. There are also ongoing running costs to consider. While the running costs will be lower per-email for heavy volume mailers than the cloud-based alternatives, you must also consider the overhead costs of things like administration, maintenance, security and so on.
- **Scaling expense** - As you scale your email operations, you will have to add each new element to your MTA manually. These alterations to scale take time, and can be costly.
- **Substantial setup Time** - Initially, it takes an average of three months to get an on-premise MTA set up and ready to go. Even once it is ready, an on-premise MTA may take up more of your time than the alternative, given the amount of on-site maintenance, management and administration it will need.
- **Increased responsibility** - As the owner of the software, you are directly responsible (and liable) for any security breaches or damaging incidents. You must be prepared to hold the fort yourself, with all of the analysis, updating and vigilance that entails.

02

CLOUD-BASED EMAIL RELAY

Cloud-based email relays, or cloud-based SMTPs are typically subscription-based services hosted on the Cloud. Like on-premise MTAs, they usually lack front-end development functions. Using a cloud-based email relay also means relinquishing a degree of control over elements like security, speed, and so on. However, there are advantages when it comes to ease and speed of setup. For those sending fewer than 2 million emails on average, this may prove a more cost-efficient option than an on-premise MTA.

THE PROS:

- + Fast setup** - With a cloud-based SMTP subscription, the infrastructure is already in place before you begin. All you have to do is sign up and create your account. It can be done easily within hours or even minutes, if you know what you're looking for and how to access it. Contrast this with the three-month average time to set up an on-premise MTA.
- + Minimal admin time** - In theory, your subscription provider should cover you for security breaches, damages, downtime and so on within the terms of your contract with them. This means that unless you (or your company) are the direct perpetrators of any security breach, you are neither responsible nor liable for any security issues which arise. This saves time, and can potentially save you overheads on things like insurance and cyber-security management.
- + Easy to scale** - Whether you want to scale up or scale down, the rungs of the ladder are already there. You can step easily in either direction. While you may not have the same level of control about the email model you're moving towards as you would have had with an MTA, you also don't need to spend a lot of time and money altering your system. The software on the Cloud will adjust itself to your needs swiftly as and when you ask it to.

+ Moderate costs - The initial outlay for a cloud-based email relay is negligible when compared to the vast amounts needed to purchase and set-up an on-premise MTA. Depending on the volume of emails you send, the running costs often work out cheaper, as well. You'll need fewer management/admin staff to tend to your email activities, thus saving on staff costs. Nor will you need to buy your own security software. You may not even need to insure your digital activities if your cloud provider is covering you as part of your subscription deal (however, it is well worth looking into the small print for that one).

THE CONS:

- Long-term cost** - For bulk mailers, cloud email services are far less cost-efficient than on-premise MTAs. The price per-email is much more, meaning that the comparative cheapness of the initial outlay may not be enough to offset costs over time.
- Little control** - Those who like granular control would be much better off with an MTA. Cloud solutions are subject to the ultimate control of their providers. If the system goes down, you are entirely reliant upon the resources and schedule of that third party to fix the issue. Furthermore, there is little to nothing you can do about deploy delay, or features you dislike.
- Limited customization** - While many cloud-based SMTPs offer a decent degree of tailoring, you cannot integrate on CRMs and security features in the same way that you can with your own onsite system.

03

HYBRID SOLUTIONS

A major issue with the email relay options available is that they don't all cover every eventuality. Different systems are better for different kinds of email – and we're not all sending the exact same email to the exact same audience all of the time. Think of it like putting together a wardrobe. If you could only choose one outfit which you had to wear every day for the rest of your life, you'd probably do a lot of compromising in order to get something which works for your lifestyle most of the time. However, there would be a lot of occasions where that outfit would not be at its best. This is why we shop around. Different clothes serve different purposes. That's why our wardrobes carry a range of clothing styles.

Comparing your wardrobe to your email marketing efforts isn't that far-fetched, because the fact remains that one size often does not fit all when it comes to emailing. And you absolutely can blend different email services in the same way that you can blend the clothing in your wardrobe. It's called a Hybrid Solution. In the same kind of technological language, our wardrobes could be described as 'hybrid clothing solutions'.

	MTA	Cloud	Hybrid
Control	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Security	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Customization	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Dependability	HIGH	LOW	HIGH
Price per email	DEPENDS	DEPENDS	DEPENDS
Setup cost	HIGH	LOW	LOW
Setup time	HIGH	LOW	LOW
Admin time	HIGH	LOW	LOW
Maintenance costs	HIGH	LOW	LOW

WHAT IS A HYBRID SOLUTION?

With a hybrid platform, you can get the best of all worlds. A hybrid system will allow you to aggregate and control the various email servers you're working through, and segment your outreach to best effect. So, you can get the cost benefits of your MTA when bulk mailing, but can also save on smaller mailshots by switching to a cloud-based SMTP as and when you need to. For example, if the cloud is down, your MTA can pick up the slack. If you're updating your MTA's security, funnel sensitive emails through the cloud until your new system is up and running. These are but two examples of the many, many ways in which a hybrid system can be utilised to plug gaps, balance costs, and enhance performance.

A hybrid solution allows you to create your own unique blend of mailing styles and solutions. What's more, it provides a number of benefits which legacy options don't. For example:

- **Flexibility** - Not all email tools are created equal. Different email types are better for different audiences, different regions, and different purposes. With a hybrid dashboard, you can precisely target your segments using the kind of email tool which will work best for them.
- **ROI** - Flexibility increases deliverability, which increases performance, which increases ROI. Furthermore, blending your email solutions can save you a lot in costs. For example, you can vastly reduce your cost-per-email by sending internal memos through a cheaper server, allowing you to focus the big bucks on the customer-facing emails in need of a bit more razzamatazz.
- **Insights** - Combining analytics across a number of platforms is one of the best ways to get a detailed, nuanced data picture. If you want to really learn about your customers, aggregating the data across email solutions is one of the best ways to do so.

IN CONCLUSION

Choosing the right email platform is a crucial decision. It impacts your entire operation, for better and worse. Luckily, whichever platform you end up deeming best for your needs, services like Ongage can empower it. Whether it's cloud based, on-premise MTA, or both, you can easily connect each with Ongage's feature-rich dashboard to get all the pros without any of the cons.

Doing so grants access to an advanced email marketing platform and the ability to execute campaigns via one or more email delivery systems. This ensures the coveted flexibility and agility Email Marketers are looking for. An advanced marketing analytics suite guarantees valuable insights, which in turn improve deliverability, performance and eventually ROI.

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