



What to know when adding email to collections:

**Experian and TrueAccord's Guide for
Digital-First Collections**

Introduction

“Digital transformation” has become a buzzword in just about every industry, and still, the collections space has been slow to adapt. While digital tools have evolved, strict government regulation and scrutiny have made even the most ambitious companies hesitant to try new channels. Instead, much of the technology development in the industry has been focused on the existing “call and collect” model—speed dialing, automating aspects of call center operations, and implementing robo-agents.

Inevitably, consumer preferences have changed over time. Digital communications are expected and preferred, as they allow consumers to engage when they want to, on the channel they want, on the device they prefer. Other financial services have already shifted their strategies.

People are accustomed to managing their financial and banking services online and through mobile apps. It's time for debt collection to catch up.

We will take you through the benefits and challenges that collections agencies should consider when adding digital communications to their outreach strategies.

The 3 key takeaways you'll learn:

- How digital-first collections reaps benefits beyond adapting to changing consumer communication preferences
- How important it is to consider data quality, email infrastructure and validation before adding email as an outreach channel
- How to future proof your foundation for digital collections



The Benefits of Digital Communications— What the Data Suggests

Improved compliance

Debt collection is a highly regulated industry, so it's not surprising that most companies are hesitant to implement changes. Fortunately, email messaging actually allows for greater compliance controls for agencies. Rather than relying on human agents, email communications are sent using systems that allow for prior internal legal review and close control of the messages being sent to consumers. All email messages can be carefully crafted and reviewed by legal experts before they get sent. Additionally, the timing and cadence of messaging can be controlled with computer programming, ensuring that all communications meet FDCPA and state requirements. With email, every consumer has an easily audited paper trail of their communication history around collections.

Improved contact and engagement rates

It's no secret that consumers aren't picking up their phones from unknown callers. The [increase in robo-calls](#), improvement in call screening technology, and a general move toward digital channels have led to decreasing right party contact rates throughout the industry. Even the Pew Research Center [had to shift toward online polling](#) because of decreasing telephone response rates. This trend of declining right party contact rates will only continue. Collections must adapt to consumer preferences with additional channels such as email, SMS, and voicemail drops or they'll be unsuccessful in capturing people's attention and engagement. Transitioning to digital communications and self-service online portals will also increase customer engagement rates.

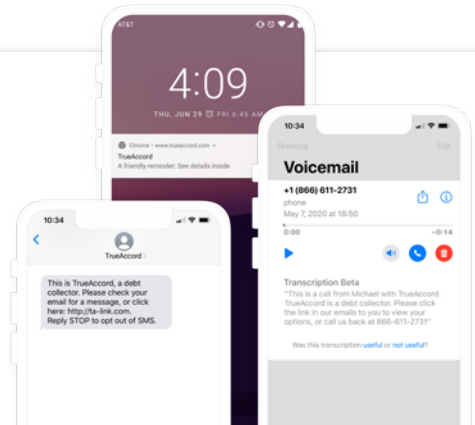
Providing avenues where customers can resolve their accounts on their own time and without the need for a physical outbound calling agent provides a three-fold benefit: lower staffing costs, increased compliance and better customer engagement and liquidation.

Better personalization

A major advantage of email, and digital communication in general, is its flexibility. With email, it's possible to send different messages and offers to different consumers. This is especially crucial during times of economic uncertainty. Leveraging machine learning can help choose the best email message for each customer, but even simple strategies like A/B testing and different engagement strategies can help improve email engagement rates.

Digital communications allow consumers to engage on their own schedules.

TrueAccord has unique expertise in emailing at scale, with over 20 million emails sent per month. Their data shows that 85% of debt collection emails are opened on mobile devices and 20% are opened outside of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA) allowed calling hours.




Plus, by offering a range of communication channels and methods for customer interaction, customers can pick and choose how they want to engage, since no customer outreach method is “one-size-fits all.”

Adaptability during times of rapid change

With the pandemic's sudden and massive effect on how we work, the ability to adapt quickly is paramount to surviving, and even thriving, during these difficult economic times. Transitioning to digital collections allows for seamless continuation of operations when servicing doesn't rely on physical locations. Work from home protocols can be quickly put in place instead. Moreover, given the economic strain that pandemic-driven shutdowns have caused, many organizations are bracing themselves for a [“tidal wave of consumer debt issues”](#) once stimulus programs end, and they will need to scale operations rapidly.

Going digital ensures that you don't have to hire and train as many agents to accommodate increased volume.

While we don't know what else the future holds, the ability to adapt and scale quickly through digital processes will remain indispensable.



Going Digital? Here's What to Consider

Digital communications are a powerful way to improve contact rates, add a personal touch for consumers, and even streamline compliance, but most companies are not equipped with the proper infrastructure to get started. While optimizing digital communications is an ongoing process, here are two major factors to consider before getting started.

Data Quality for email infrastructure

[Data quality](#) for digital collections enables you to proactively build a foundation of accurate insights to inform result-driven decisions and recognize ROI. Leveraging high-quality email data is essential to building your email infrastructure and effectively reaching your customers, saving everyone time, energy, and cost.

Eighty-seven percent of organizations say data insight is essential to managing operational efficiency and customer experience in a digital environment, [according to Experian's latest research](#).

Since email is a relatively new way to collect on outstanding debt, it's important to understand why you want to implement an effective email infrastructure for digital communications with data quality—the right way.

A complete, correct email list could start you on the right foot through accuracy and deliverability, while keeping compliance top of mind.

Deliverability means your collection notices are reaching the right inboxes. Furthermore, precise email delivery keeps you in compliance by establishing you as a reputable sender to ensure consumer protection from spam and misuse.

There are several technical standards in place that may impact your ability to reach consumers, including [Sender Policy Framework \(SPF\)](#), [Domain Keys Identified Mail \(DKIM\)](#), [Domain-based Message Authentication Reporting and Conformance \(DMARC\)](#), and [Brand Indicators for Message Identification \(BIMI\)](#). Additionally, spam filters, send times, volume, and even the content of the message itself are all factors that will keep you from delivering your collections notice to the right inbox.

Now that you know why data quality is essential to a strong email infrastructure for digital communications, let's discuss how you get there. Get started by working with a data quality partner, like [Experian](#), to build your reliable email list. [Email verification](#) will append and verify emails if you don't have an email list or if some of your contact fields are blank.

Services like [Experian](#) can use advanced data matching to map account holder names and addresses to valid email addresses.

To future-proof your digital communications strategy for collections, think about integrating a [real-time email validation tool](#). This will test the accuracy and deliverability of an email as it enters your system. It does this by automatically checking if the domain is properly formatted and the mail service is up and running. If the email passes the test, it is marked verified and enters your database. For digital communications to succeed, make sure your email infrastructure is built from a foundation of data quality.

Experian can help you build a valid email list that reaches the right inboxes and avoids spam traps, while establishing your agency as a reputable sender.

Providing a truly comprehensive and flexible customer experience

Keep in mind that any outreach, whether a call, an email, an SMS, a voicemail, or a letter, should be part of an integrated consumer experience. Using different vendors for letters and emails is no excuse for a customer to get the same (or worse, conflicting) messages on the same day in two different channels.

Additionally, your communications should seamlessly fit into all other parts of the customer experience. Remember that a consumer wouldn't (and shouldn't) know if there are different tools or vendors used across various digital channels. A consumer should be able to call into a call center, respond to an email, or use a self-service tool to make changes to their account following communication from any channel.

This is where the use of artificial intelligence, machine learning and other new technologies can help integrate and provide a comprehensive and flexible customer experience. Some collection agencies use artificial intelligence, but only in a limited manner to optimize a single channel, like handling inbound calls.

But there are companies, such as [TrueAccord](#), which harness the power of machine learning to provide a truly custom communication collections experience for each person.

This kind of machine learning application continuously captures data points across [various digital channels](#) and throughout the customer lifecycle, enabling powerful insights on making sure the outreach strategy is optimized on the most relevant channels for each individual.

Adding digital communications into collection outreach can be a challenging but rewarding process

While there are many prerequisites to implement before starting, the results are worth it. Not only will you see improved customer engagement and liquidation, you'll also be better equipped for the future.

Customer preferences will continue to change over time, so it's important that your strategies and technology infrastructure can evolve with them.

Despite the challenges outlined above, shifting your collections to digital channels is possible. To achieve these results with confidence and speed, work with industry-leading partners like Experian and TrueAccord to help you modernize your collections for today and tomorrow's consumer. You'll not only provide the best customer experience in collections but also boost your bottom line.

To learn more about what Experian and TrueAccord can do for you, contact Experian [here](#) and TrueAccord [here](#).



About Experian

Experian unlocks the power of data to create opportunity for consumers, businesses, and society. We empower consumers and our clients to manage their data with confidence, so they can maximize every opportunity. We gather, analyze, and process data in ways others can't. Leveraging data quality helps individuals and businesses alike to be innovative, make smarter decisions, and thrive, preventing identity fraud and crime.



Improved data quality

85% of organizations see data as one of the most valuable assets of their business, and yet a lack of trusted data can still be a consistent roadblock. We're here to help you get the most out of your data and make data fit for purpose.



Contact data validation

Making sure your customer addresses, emails, and phone numbers are accurate and reliable is our top priority. With Experian's data validation solutions, you can be confident that you are reaching your customers efficiently and effectively.

- Stay connected with your customers by delivering a seamless experience.
- Increase deliverability of packages, direct mail, emails, and phone calls.
- Explore innovative ways to market, like text messaging.



Data quality management

Data quality management with Experian means powerful data profiling, data discovery, data cleansing and enrichment, and the skill to run full-volume analyses. With the ability to connect to hundreds of data sources, you gain a more comprehensive view of your customers, business operations, and more.

- Work efficiently to inform business strategies.
- Reduce risk and enable compliance.
- Better understand your customers to provide an exceptional experience.

Experian makes your data fit for purpose.



We were named on The Best Data Quality Software and Solutions by CRM Magazine.

We are honored to be named one of the best solutions on the market.



About TrueAccord

TrueAccord is reinventing the relationship between creditors and lenders with a machine learning-driven, digital approach to debt collection. Our technology personalizes outreach to each customer across digital channels, continuously optimizing for performance while delivering a customer experience that builds long-term brand loyalty.



Automated Collections

96% of our customers resolve their accounts through self-service offered by our product and digital channels. We're conveniently online and accessible 24/7, without relying on a call center team.



Scalable Systems

Our digital automated collections strategy improves and scales up in real-time as placement volume increases.



Superior Performance

Our proprietary machine-learning technology isn't subject to traditional call and collect staffing concerns and provides personalized customer experiences that optimize for liquidation.

Exit this crisis with improved brand perception.

Customers want to get out of debt. We make it easy.

*"I love how simple you guys make it to pay off all my debts. **Well on my way to fixing my credit and I owe it all to you!**"*

*"The first collection agency I've ever dealt with that **treated me like a human** and not a complete delinquent."*

*"This was an **incredibly convenient solution** to something that nobody enjoys doing - contacting collections agencies."*

Better Business Bureau



Google

TrueAccord
303 2nd St, San Francisco, CA
4.8 ★★★★★

*"You motivated me to repay my debts and monitor my credit. You appreciated me and I felt the **extraordinary customer service** from the day I first took the loan. I am grateful and **even during this pandemic** I felt my loyalty to complete my payment of this loan over any other bills. Thank you again!"*