# ValiMail

# HBO Leverages Email Authentication to Protect the Brand and Stop Impersonation Attacks



## The Business

HBO is a premium TV programming subsidiary of Time Warner, Inc. But to millions around the globe, it's best known as the cable, satellite, and streaming network responsible for such critically acclaimed TV shows such as Game of Thrones and Silicon Valley. At recent count, the media giant has approximately 50 million subscribers in the U.S. and 130 million subscribers in 150 different countries worldwide.

## The Challenge

HBO manages a long list of company-related domains including HBO.com, HBONordic.com, HBOAsia.com, and numerous domains for its shows' websites such as gameofthrones.com. In addition, HBO uses more than 20 different cloud services through which the company sends email notifications, promotions, and other correspondences to its employees, partners, and customers around the world. These services handle internal business and workflow systems as well as marketing email campaigns for upcoming shows and pay-per-view events. All of this generates a staggering amount of email traffic: as many as 11 million emails sent from HBO domains in a typical 30-day period.

With that big of a brand footprint on email, HBO was a natural target for impersonators hoping to ride the coattails of HBO's good name into customer inboxes via phishing emails that appear to be sent by HBO, but which are fraudulent. Such impersonation attacks had not been a problem to date, but Stephen Fridakis, HBO's Chief Information Security Officer, recognized a real threat and was looking for ways to prevent fraudsters from hijacking the company's brand.

## In Brief

**CHALLENGE:** Take proactive steps to protect the HBO brand and reputation against email impersonation attacks and Business Email Compromise (BEC).

**SOLUTION:** ValiMail's Email Authentication Service automated the implementation, maintenance, and ongoing monitoring of DMARC authentication for HBO domains, including overseas business units and numerous shows' domains.

**RESULTS:** Complete elimination of the risk of email impersonation on HBO domains. Blocked 1M+ suspicious emails and authenticated 178M+ emails. Daily automated reports and an easy management console streamline visibility of HBO's distributed email ecosystem across a variety of clouds, freeing the IT team to focus on other security issues.

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Fridakis had firsthand experience with the complicated requirements of implementing and effectively monitoring DMARC, SPF, and DKIM standards. Rather than trying to build internal expertise and capacity to tackle email authentication, Fridakis wanted a more automated solution. He explains his requirements: "ValiMail gives me visibility into who sends emails on my behalf and the capability to manage it on an ongoing basis."

## The Solution

The first step for HBO was to generate a whitelist of the company's authorized email services, including external senders such as third-party vendors sending on behalf of HBO. Fridakis' team then compared this list with a report from ValiMail's Email Authentication Service™, which uncovered all the entities actually sending emails for HBO.com and its related domains.

Fridakis describes this process of identifying discrepancies as invaluable for a huge corporation with so many separate moving parts. "This implementation brought us very good awareness of who was sending on our behalf and there was a benefit right away, before we had even implemented any of the authentication standards," Fridakis says.

It was after this initial step that ValiMail's unique automated technologies really kicked in, navigating HBO through the tricky process of DMARC enforcement. ValiMail's automation is one of the most important benefits, says Fridakis, distinguishing it from self-help and consulting-based alternatives provided by other vendors, which were time-consuming and manual. Getting to enforcement without automation is a tedious and finicky process, and thus costly, requiring a near bottomless pool of IT time, labor, and skill.

With ValiMail, however, HBO can now easily track the changing IP landscape of cloud-sending services and adapt in real-time with a fully automated authentication platform. HBO can add and remove new senders without figuring out the underlying IPs or creating complicated authentication records in DNS. ValiMail's web console makes the process as easy as 1-click.

"There is nothing you can do on your own to provide ongoing monitoring and intelligence services," Fridakis explains. "ValiMail gives you that information as they see email traversing in your environment. It is a really big deal to have this visibility on a timely basis and be able to take some action."

## Results

ValiMail's automated email authentication service stream-lined the process of enabling DMARC authentication and enforcement for HBO's domains and enabled HBO to establish a clear process for bringing on cloud service providers that need to send email on HBO's behalf.

At the end of the day, Fridakis says, "The reason we went with ValiMail is that we knew we could prevent fraudsters from hijacking the HBO brand."

Based on their success stopping impersonation attacks and providing visibility and control, ValiMail earned HBO's referral to Time Warner, the parent company. ValiMail now provides email authentication services for all of Time Warner and its subsidiaries, including Warner Brothers and Turner Entertainment. In this expanded partnership, ValiMail has already blocked more than 31M+ suspicious emails and has authenticated more than 350M+ emails since getting to enforcement.