

LEAD GENERATION

Cold Email Agency in the USA

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Cold Email Agency in the USA: What It Costs, What to Expect in 90 Days, and Red Flags

Short answer: A US cold email agency typically charges a monthly retainer of roughly \$1,500 to \$10,000 (estimates from agency-published guides), sometimes with a one-time onboarding charge or a per-meeting model instead. Expect two to three weeks of domain and inbox warmup before launch, first meetings soon after, and a fair verdict only after about 90 days.

Key takeaways

- US law (CAN-SPAM) allows B2B cold email without prior consent, but every email needs an honest sender, a **physical address** and a working opt-out honored within **10 business days**. You stay liable even when an agency sends for you.
- The stricter rules come from mailbox providers: Gmail asks bulk senders to keep spam complaints **below 0.10%** and never reach 0.30%; Yahoo wants unsubscribes honored within **2 days**.
- Check the **inbox math** in any proposal: at about 30 cold emails per inbox per day, 5,000 new contacts a month on a 3-step sequence needs roughly 24 warmed inboxes.
- Judge an agency at day 90, not day 30. Weeks 1-3 are setup and warmup; weeks 4-8 are launch and learning; weeks 9-13 show whether meetings turn into pipeline.

The US rules in plain English: the law, then the inboxes

Who sets the rule	What it requires	What to ask the agency to show you
CAN-SPAM (FTC)	Accurate From/Reply-To, a non-deceptive subject line, a valid physical postal address, a clear opt-out, opt-outs honored within 10 business days, and no selling or transferring of opted-out addresses. No B2B exception.	A sample email with your address and opt-out line, and how the suppression list is kept across all campaigns
Gmail (bulk senders, 5,000+ a day to personal Gmail)	SPF, DKIM and DMARC; spam rate in Postmaster Tools below 0.30%, ideally below 0.10%; one-click unsubscribe for marketing mail	Authentication records on each sending domain and current spam rates
Yahoo	SPF and DKIM, DMARC at least p=none for bulk senders, complaint rate below 0.3%, unsubscribes honored within 2 days	How fast an opt-out stops the sequence (it should be immediate)
Outlook.com / Hotmail / Live	Since May 2025, high-volume senders need SPF, DKIM and DMARC that pass and align	Inbox placement tests that include Microsoft addresses, not just Gmail

What US cold email agencies charge (in USD)

Pricing model	Estimated US range (2026)	What to check
Entry-level retainer (one campaign, one channel)	about \$1,500 to \$2,500 per month	Whether data and inboxes are included or billed on top
Typical professional retainer	about \$2,500 to \$5,000 per month	Number of new contacts per month and inboxes used
Larger or multi-channel programs	about \$7,000 to \$10,000+ per month	Whether LinkedIn or calling is really included
One-time onboarding charge (where charged)	about \$1,500 to \$5,000	Who owns the domains and inboxes it pays for
Pay per qualified meeting	about \$200 to \$500 per meeting	The written definition of "qualified"
Add-ons billed separately	about \$500 to \$2,000 per month	Data credits, inboxes, warmup tools, copy revisions

Inbox math check for a cold email proposal (template: copy and adapt)

New contacts per month (from the proposal): 5,000
 Emails in the sequence (first email + follow-ups): 3
 Total emails per month: $5,000 \times 3 = 15,000$
 US business days per month: ~21
 Emails per business day: $15,000 / 21 = \sim 715$
 Safe cold sends per inbox per day: ~30
 Inboxes needed: $715 / 30 = \sim 24$ inboxes
 At 2-3 inboxes per secondary domain: ~8 to 12 domains

Now compare with the proposal:

- Does it mention roughly this many inboxes and domains?
- Are they warmed BEFORE launch (2-3 weeks)?
- Who registers and owns them?

Sending across four US time zones

US zone	Example cities	Send window (local)	Same window in London (summer)	Same window in India
Eastern (EDT, UTC-4)	New York, Atlanta, Miami	8:00 to 11:00am	1:00 to 4:00pm	5:30 to 8:30pm
Central (CDT, UTC-5)	Chicago, Dallas, Houston	8:00 to 11:00am	2:00 to 5:00pm	6:30 to 9:30pm
Mountain (MDT, UTC-6)	Denver, Salt Lake City	8:00 to 11:00am	3:00 to 6:00pm	7:30 to 10:30pm
Pacific (PDT, UTC-7)	Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle	8:00 to 11:00am	4:00 to 7:00pm	8:30 to 11:30pm

Your first 90 days with a US cold email agency, week by week

Weeks	What the agency should be doing	What you should see	Numbers to ask for
1	ICP workshop, offer and proof points, buy secondary domains, set up inboxes and DNS	A written ICP, the domain list in your name, draft copy	Number of domains and inboxes vs your inbox math
2-3	Warmup, list building and verification, copy approval, reply-handling rules agreed	Sample records, final sequences, a test email to you	List size by segment, verification rate
4-5	Launch at low volume, ramp gradually, read every reply	Live access to the sending tool; first replies	Bounce rate, spam complaints, positive reply rate
6-8	Test segments and angles, cut what does not work, book meetings	Meetings on your calendar with real buyers	Meetings booked vs held, replies by segment
9-11	Scale the winning segments across more warmed inboxes	A steadier weekly rhythm of meetings	Cost per qualified meeting
12-13	Quarter review: what converted to pipeline, what to change	A written plan for months 4-6	Opportunities created from the meetings

Who should hire a US cold email agency, and who should not

A cold email agency is a good fit if...	Wait, or do something else, if...
You sell to a clearly defined US buyer with a deal value that can pay for meetings	Your deal value is so small that a few hundred dollars per meeting cannot pay back
You are entering the US from the UK, Europe, the Middle East or India and need meetings before you hire	You need closed revenue within 30 days
Someone on your side can take meetings within a day or two	Nobody can run the calls, in US hours
You want to test segments and messages before building an SDR team	Your US market is a few dozen accounts; that is account-based work, not volume email

Quick answers

How much does a cold email agency cost in the USA?

Agency-published 2026 guides put most US cold email retainers between about \$2,500 and \$5,000 a month, with entry-level services from around \$1,500 and larger programs above \$7,000 to \$10,000. Some add a one-time onboarding charge; pay-per-meeting models quoted at roughly \$200 to \$500 per meeting also exist. Treat all of these as estimates and get written quotes.

Is cold email legal in the United States?

Yes. The CAN-SPAM Act does not require prior consent for commercial email, including B2B. It does require accurate sender details, a non-deceptive subject line, a valid physical postal address, a clear way to opt out, and opt-outs honored within 10 business days. Penalties can reach \$53,088 per violating email, and both the sender and the company being promoted can be liable.

How long before a cold email agency books meetings in the US?

New sending domains and inboxes usually need two to three weeks of warmup before real campaigns start. First replies and meetings often follow within a few weeks of launch. A fair judgment of whether the program works takes about 90 days, because the first month mostly measures setup and the second month is spent testing segments and messages.

How many emails should a cold email agency send per day?

Per inbox, keep it low. Instantly's own warmup guidance caps a sending inbox at about 30 emails a day after a gradual ramp. Agencies reach volume by spreading sends across many warmed inboxes on several secondary domains, not by pushing one inbox harder. A proposal promising big daily volumes from a handful of inboxes is a warning sign.

What time should cold emails be sent to US prospects?

Send in the recipient's local business morning, not yours. The continental US spans four time zones (Eastern, Central, Mountain and Pacific), three hours apart from coast to coast, and Arizona mostly skips daylight saving time. A good agency segments lists by time zone so a Seattle buyer is not emailed at 5am local time.

Do Gmail and Yahoo rules apply to cold email agencies?

Yes, whenever they send to Gmail or Yahoo addresses at scale. Both require SPF, DKIM and a DMARC record for bulk senders, a spam complaint rate below 0.3% (Gmail recommends under 0.1%), and one-click unsubscribe for marketing mail. Yahoo also expects unsubscribes honored within two days. Outlook.com added similar authentication rules for high-volume senders in May 2025.

Should I judge a cold email agency on open rates?

No. Apple Mail Privacy Protection preloads images on many devices, so an email can register as opened even if nobody read it, and open tracking pixels can also hurt deliverability. Judge an agency on positive reply rate, meetings held with your target buyers, and pipeline created from those meetings.

What are the red flags when hiring a US cold email agency?

Watch for domains registered in the agency's own account with no transfer clause, launching campaigns on day one with no warmup, daily volume promises that do not match the number of inboxes, open rate as the headline metric, shared sending pools across clients, missing unsubscribe or postal address, and no live access to the sending tool.

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