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PTR and reverse DNS: why your e-mail depends on it

E-mail

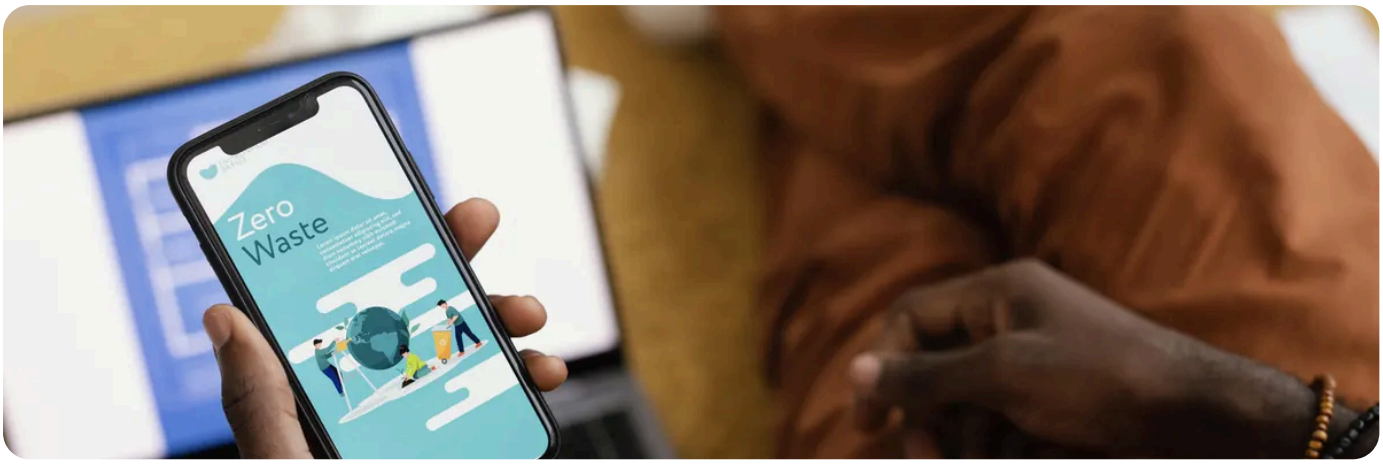
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PTR and reverse DNS: why your e-mail depends on it

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An ordinary DNS record answers the question *"what address does this name have?"*. The **PTR** record answers the opposite: *"what name does this address have?"*. That is why it is called **reverse DNS**.

It sounds like a networking detail with no consequences. It is not: it is one of the first things a mail server checks before deciding whether to accept your message.

Why e-mail depends on it

When your server delivers a message, the recipient's server sees the IP connecting and asks the reverse question: *who are you?*

1. If the IP answers with a coherent name, the message starts with **credit**.

2. If the IP **answers nothing**, the sender is anonymous. And an anonymous sender smells like spam - many servers refuse right there, without even looking at the content.

! **This is why "the e-mail sends but never arrives".**
Without a PTR, the message can be refused silently. On your side it looks sent; on theirs it never existed. It is one of the most frequent causes of that symptom.

Does your service already have one?

Service	Situation
Shared hosting	**Already configured.** The server's reverse DNS is ours and it is done - there is nothing for you to do
Reseller	Same: the reseller server has its PTR configured

Service	Situation
VPS or dedicated	The IP is yours, and the PTR is set to whichever name you choose. **Ask us** and we will handle it

The name should make sense.
The convention is to point the PTR at the same name the mail server announces - usually something like *mail.yourdomain.co.mz*. A PTR pointing at an unrelated name is worth almost as little as having none.

How to check, in seconds

You need nothing installed - you can do it on your own computer:

System	Command
Windows	`nslookup 203.0.113.10` in Command Prompt
macOS or Linux	`host 203.0.113.10` in Terminal
No commands	MXToolbox has a *Reverse Lookup* option that does the same in the browser

Replace *203.0.113.10* with the IP you want to test. If a name comes back, the PTR exists. If nothing comes back, it does not - and that is when you act.

A rule that catches people out

With ordinary records, **several names can point at the same IP** - that is how dozens of sites live on one server. With PTR it is the reverse: **one IP has one name, and only one**.

So it makes no sense to ask for a PTR "for each domain" on your server. You pick one name, the server's, and that one answers for all of them.

A PTR on its own is not enough

It is one of three pillars, not the only one. The other two are authentication - **SPF, DKIM and DMARC** - and sending behaviour. A server with a perfect PTR and no SPF still lands in spam.

And if the IP is already on a blocklist, the PTR will not get it off: see **your server IP on a blocklist**.

NEED A HAND?

Have a VPS and want reverse DNS configured? Tell us the name you want.

Request configuration →

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