From domain purchase to a working website

Onboarding Email Audit | September 20, 2026 | v1.0

Self-initiated project. This report reviews the invented DomainNest source pack. Findings describe those supplied assets; no real campaign results or platform execution are claimed.

The decision

Make first website publication the purpose of this journey. Help buyers reach the right setup path, then stop setup reminders when publication is verified. Move mailbox promotion out of the pre-activation sequence.

Audit boundary	What was supplied
One product and audience	Domain registration with an included basic builder; first-time small-service-business domain buyers.
One journey, five emails	Purchase through day seven. Source references I01-I04 and E01-E05 are in the accompanying source pack.
One activation action	First verified public, non-parked website on the purchased domain within seven days.
Evidence limits	No performance data, customer interviews, platform access, live link tests or technical verification.

Three things to fix first

1. Stop messages that contradict customer state. E04 assumes a live site; the supplied rules never check for one. Add send-time gates before testing copy (F04, F06).

2. Give setup one clear next action. E01 opens a generic dashboard; E02 sells a mailbox before website activation (F01, F02).

3. Establish what activation means. Confirm a usable site, not a click, draft or DNS change. Instrument this before claiming improvement (F08).

What the first three emails do

Observations are tied to supplied text and rules. Consequences are hypotheses, not measured customer behavior.

E01 / Purchase + 0h / F01

Subject: Your domain is ready. What will you build?

Evidence: “Build a website, add a professional mailbox, or explore more names”

Issue: Three competing activities and a generic dashboard CTA do not establish the first useful setup step.

Recommendation: Keep the welcome, lead with website setup, and link to the setup chooser. Illustrative CTA: “Start your website setup.” Confirm the destination exists; do not promise one-click activation.

E02 / Purchase + 24h / F02

Subject: Make it yours with a professional email address

Evidence: “You can return to your website setup whenever you are ready.”

Issue: The message explicitly defers the desired activation action and asks for another purchase. No state check makes this selective.

Recommendation: Use this slot for setup education. Keep mailbox education outside this pre-activation audit journey. This is a sequencing recommendation, not a full replacement email.

E03 / Purchase + 72h / F03

Subject: Connect your domain in a few steps

Evidence: “Open DNS settings and point your domain to your hosting provider.”

Issue: The supplied product includes a builder, but every buyer receives the external-host-style DNS instruction. Host choice and required records are not supplied.

Recommendation: Branch by known setup path. Builder: resume the project. External host: use provider-specific setup guidance. Unknown: choose a path. Do not prescribe records or change nameservers in an email audit.

Where the journey loses context

The problem is partly scheduling logic. Rewriting the messages alone would leave the main failure intact.

E04 / Purchase + 120h / F04

Subject: Your website is ready for visitors
Evidence: “Now that your website is live, add a professional mailbox.”

Issue: The live-site assertion is unsupported by I02. An unfinished customer could receive a false success message; a successful customer is sent an upsell regardless of broader contact rules.

Recommendation: Remove the assertion and upsell. Use a setup reminder only for eligible, verified-not-activated customers. Activated customers exit this journey; any subsequent mailbox journey needs separate scope and eligibility.

E05 / Purchase + 168h / F05

Subject: Still thinking about your website?
Evidence: “Explore our website plans, mailbox options, and other tools.” CTA: “See your options.”

Issue: A second generic menu still fails to tell an unfinished buyer how to resume. Activated customers remain scheduled, too.

Recommendation: Point to the known setup step, or a chooser if the path is unknown. Make this the final eligible reminder. Do not extend an unresponsive account into an indefinite sequence.

Journey-level findings / F06-F08

Supplied rule	Recommended correction
All five messages queued at purchase	Recheck permission, domain/account state, activation, support hold and contact history immediately before send.
No behavior checks after enrollment	Cancel pending setup reminders after verified activation; do not confuse missing data with not activated.
Cap and deduplication not documented	One enrollment; idempotent message key; one lifecycle send per rolling 24 hours as a proposed global cap.
No outcome metrics supplied	Validate site-activation events and a mature seven-day cohort before comparing performance.

The source pack says permission, bounce and complaint checks exist. Retain them. This audit does not establish consent law, live integration behavior or inbox rendering.

A small implementation queue

The accompanying CSV contains all nine findings, evidence, dependencies and acceptance checks. Effort is relative implementation work, not hours or an SnD implementation quote.

Order	Finding and action	Dependency / effort
1	F04 + F06: remove the false success claim and add send-time eligibility/activation gates.	Trustworthy status and timestamps. Medium to large.
2	F07: prevent duplicate enrollments and conflicting sends.	Shared campaign history. Medium to large.
3	F08: instrument verified activation and mature cohorts.	Product/analytics owner. Large if verification is absent.
4	F01 + F02: lead with setup and remove the day-one mailbox diversion.	Verified setup destination and safety gates. Small to medium.
5	F03 + F05: route by setup path and end with one relevant reminder.	Path signal, resume links, external-host guidance. Medium to large.
6	F09: test the direct setup destination.	Safety, event QA and sufficient mature observations. Medium.

What can happen before integrations are ready

Correct the unsupported E04 assertion and remove irrelevant sales copy in draft. Do not publish a behavior-based sequence until its states and exits have been verified. If reliable status cannot be established, hold the revised reminders; do not treat an absent activation event as proof of inactivity.

How to use the CSV

Assign a product/analytics owner for state and event work, a lifecycle owner for scheduling/content, and a QA owner for the scenario checks. One person may hold several roles. These are proposed responsibilities, not claims about an existing team.

Each fix includes an observable acceptance check. Complete the must-fix items before starting an experiment. The audit ends with the recommendations and handoff; account access, programming and full email rewriting are outside the sold scope.

Route by progress, not just time

Platform-neutral architecture. Proposed rules below have not been configured or executed in any marketing platform.

Stage	Decision and action
Enroll once	First completed domain purchase, target audience/locale, valid lifecycle permission; no already-verified site. Deduplicate by account + purchased domain. Keep purchase receipts separate.
Before every send	Refresh domain/account status and site status. Check permission, bounce/complaint, cancellation/refund, open setup-support hold, prior sends and activation. Fail closed for unknown/stale state.
Activated?	Verified website on purchased domain: cancel all remaining setup reminders and exit. A mailbox or renewal journey is separate, not a continuation authorized here.
No trustworthy status?	Hold. Refresh state within 24 hours; unresolved cases enter a manual review queue. If the slot window expires, skip it. Do not queue a catch-up burst.
Not activated; path known?	Builder: resume draft or publish step. External host: provider-specific connection guide. Unknown: setup chooser. Never infer path from a generic email click.
Send eligible slot	Day 0 welcome; day 1 setup education; day 3 path-specific help; day 5 setup reminder; day 7 final reminder. Cap at five, each at most once.
Window and exit	Each slot may send from its scheduled time until before the next slot; final slot expires at purchase + 192h. Enforce at least 24h between lifecycle sends; skip if no valid window remains. End after final slot/window.

Proposed state contract

Use purchase_completed, setup_path_selected and website_activation_verified with account_id, domain_id and occurred_at. Maintain fresh eligibility and site-status snapshots from an authoritative system. A proposed maximum snapshot age is 24 hours; owner must validate latency before launch. If any critical state is missing, hold the message. Replayed events must not resend.

Activation verification must cover both builder and external hosting, distinguish a parked/default page from a published site, and record the first verified time. This is a product requirement to validate, not a claim that DomainNest already supports it.

Measure a website, not an open

No baseline, lift forecast or numerical performance result is supplied. Collect and validate the outcome first.

Primary metric: seven-day activation rate

Denominator: distinct initially eligible accounts making their first domain purchase in the cohort, excluding already-activated, internal/test and duplicate records at entry. Evaluate only accounts whose full seven-day window has elapsed. Freeze assignment at entry.

Numerator: those denominator accounts whose purchased domain first satisfies website_activation_verified within 168 hours of purchase. Count once per account. Later unsubscribes, refunds or cancellations remain in the denominator; report them separately rather than selecting them out after assignment.

The day-seven reminder cannot cause an outcome inside the seven-day window. Evaluate it with a secondary 14-day activation measure after that window matures. Do not attribute a later conversion to the primary metric.

Supporting signal	Definition / limit
Setup progression	Distinct cohort accounts choosing a setup path or starting a builder project / eligible cohort accounts. Proposed instrumentation.
Email action	Unique tracked clickers / delivered recipients per message. Diagnostic only; not activation. Delivery and click data are currently missing.
Time to activation	Purchase-to-first-verified-publication time for activated accounts; always pair with the overall activation rate to expose non-activators.
Contact guardrails	Unsubscribes and complaints per delivered message; duplicate sends and contradictory reminders as counts requiring investigation.
Data quality	Missing/stale status share and event latency. Report held and skipped messages; do not silently drop their accounts from outcome cohorts.

First test / F09

Once gates pass, randomize eligible accounts between an E01 generic-dashboard destination and a direct setup destination. Keep timing, subject, body and other messages the same; both arms use corrected safety rules. Primary outcome: mature seven-day activation. Guardrails: complaints, unsubscribes, duplicate/contradictory sends and setup-support demand.

Use observed baseline and available volume to set the sample size, detectable effect and end date before launch. These are unknown today. Review operational faults immediately, but do not repeatedly stop early for a favorable result. Sparse evidence is inconclusive; report uncertainty rather than a winner.

Verify the branches before sending

These are desk-checked expected outcomes, not a platform test run.

Scenario	Expected result
Builder user, unfinished, valid permission	Relevant builder resume link in the eligible slot; no mailbox pitch.
External-host user, unfinished	Provider-specific guidance; no generic promise that DNS changes equal a live site.
Unknown setup path	Setup chooser, not a fabricated personalized destination.
Activation just before queued send	Cancel that send and every later setup reminder.
Unsubscribe, complaint or hard bounce	Suppress lifecycle sends immediately. Keep separate transactional policy out of this audit.
Canceled/refunded domain or open setup ticket	Cancel onboarding for invalid purchase; hold for setup-support case and reassess in-window after resolution.
Stale site status; no activation event	Hold and refresh; no inference of inactivity. Skip expired slots.
Duplicate event; another campaign just sent	One enrollment/send per key; defer for cap if slot permits, otherwise skip.
Activation after day seven	Exit remaining reminders; exclude from seven-day numerator but include in mature 14-day measure.

Open questions for the product owner

Can site status be verified for external hosts and distinguished from parked pages? How fresh is the data? Which setup/resume URLs exist? Can sends be canceled just before dispatch? Is a cross-campaign cap available? These dependencies must be answered before rollout, not hidden in the copy.

Recommended next action

Agree the activation definition and test the state transitions with product/analytics first. Then assign the must-fix CSV rows. This report and its priority list are the audit deliverables; implementation, a new full sequence and additional lifecycle programs require separate scope.

Deliverables: this report, DomainNest_Priority_List.csv and the separate source pack for traceability. Reply with one consolidated set of questions about these findings; new assets and implementation are outside this audit.