



SMTP Error Codes

550 –Requested actions not taken as the mailbox is unavailable.

(also called SMTP Error 5.5.0)

550 is always a problem external to your own mail server. Usually it is at the recipient's end, but it could also originate from inside your own "walls" through being caused, for example, by a firewall appliance which scans your outgoing emails once they've left your server.

SMTP Error 550 : This response can be caused by quite a few situations:

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1. SMTP Error 550 will be returned by many servers If the recipient email address simply does not exist on the remote side (you will often get "550 Invalid recipient" or "550 User account is unavailable" or "<ip-address-of- remote-server> does not like recipient - 550 Address rejected" or "550 No such user here" or "550 Not our Customer" or "550 Account not available" or "Remote host said : 550 – Barack.Obama@ThisCompany.com, this THISCOMPANY.COM Mailbox Does Not Exist – Giving up"). In this case the sender of the email needs to contact the recipient verbally to get the correct email address.

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2. SMTP Error 550 will sometimes also be returned by the recipient's anti-spam firewall if, for example, the anti-spam firewall does not like the sender (typically because the sender needs to be whitelisted). A typical example of an SMTP Error 550 return message by an anti-spam firewall might be :

*[240.240.240.240 does not like recipient.](#)
[Remote host said: 550-Verification failed for](#)
[John.Doe@YourDomain.com](#)
[550-Previous \(cached\) callout verification failure](#)
[550 Sender verify failed](#)
[Giving up on 240.240.240.240.](#)*

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3. SMTP Error 550 can also be returned by your own mail and web filtering appliance where the message leaves your mail server and is intercepted by your web and mail filtering appliance, before it leaves your premises, and for whatever configuration reasons it thinks your email is spam or dangerous for the recipient (in other words it tries to protect your company from accidentally sending viruses and accidental spam emails – through a PC being infected with a bot – to your customers). Here is a typical example of such a response :



The attached file had the following undeliverable recipient(s):
John.Doe@comcast.net

Transcript of session follows:

Command: Data...

Response: 550 Cyberoam Anti Spam Engine has identified this email as a spam. Ref-id:str=0001.0A0B0206.4BA7422C.01F5,ss=1,vtr=str,vl=0,p t=

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4. SMTP Error 550 will also be returned if the user's mailbox is not local and Mail Relay is not enabled, or the sending address is invalid (the latter is a way, by the remote server, to control spam).

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5. Other situations of SMTP Error 550 include sending mail to recipients outside of your domain where this is not allowed.

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6. SMTP Error 550 is also returned when you are attempting to send through a server which requires SMTP authentication and you have not supplied credentials (ie. your mail server, or email program, is attempting to send without SMTP authentication)

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7. Yet another set of circumstances where an SMTP error 550 might be issued include an incorrect From address when used with an ISP where you can send mail only if the From address is from a domain that they host for you (at the time of writing, September 2008, and still at time of this update, March 2010, British Telecom in the UK is such an ISP – you have to notify them through a lengthy, ridiculous, and almost soul destroying procedure, involving proving that you own the domain, for them to allow you to send emails from a domain name that they do not host for you).

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8. Another case of SMTP Error 550 is when the recipient's server is down (or cannot receive mail at this time) and the ISP's servers will retry periodically for a limited amount of time (this is often accompanied by a return mail from your ISP informing the sender of the email of just that situation).

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9. Another case of SMTP Error 550 is when the recipient's server requires you to make a change to the To part of your email to achieve successful delivery of the email (some organizations configure their receiving mail servers in this way when they have changed their domain name and want to force the senders to update his address books – for



example, My-Great-Company.com has changed its domain to MyGreatCompany.com and you are still using the old domain name).

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10. Yet another set of circumstances when the SMTP Error 550 is received is when the recipient's mailbox has been suspended. For instance, the QMAIL SMTP mail program has an endearing way of telling you about a mailbox that has been suspended :

"I'm afraid I wasn't able to deliver your message to the following addresses. This is a permanent error; I've given up. Sorry it didn't work out. <email-address@email-domain>: <ip-address-of-remote-server> does not like recipient. Remote host said: 550 [SUSPEND] Mailbox currently suspended - Please contact correspondent directly."

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11. Another circumstance of an SMTP Error 550 is when the recipient's mailbox has been disabled. The typical reasons for this are the mailbox being full (the user needs to delete messages before new ones will be accepted) or the user not having paid a bill. An example of the reply you will receive is : "550 mailbox temporarily disabled"

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12. SMTP Error 550 can also occur when either your DNS or your ISP's DNS is not configured correctly for the recipient's mailserver details, or the recipient's MX record is configured incorrectly. A typical error message for this type of error might be :

"550-Verification failed for my@exchangeserver.com - 550-Unrouteable address - 550 Sender verify failed (in reply to RCPT TO command) ".

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13. "Mailbox is inactive". Another instance of error 550 is when there is a temporary system-wide problem at the ISP. The error takes two forms, the one just quoted, or :

"5.1.0 - Unknown address error 550-'Mailbox is inactive'".

This error is almost always a problem at the hosting ISP which hosts the POP box(es) of the recipient's email address or domain. You need to inform the recipient that there is a problem with their hosting company. So, for example, if you are sending an email to John.Doe@clara.net and you get the "Mailbox is inactive" error, then you need to tell John Doe that his hosting ISP, ClaraNET, are having problems with incoming emails and that he should talk to them.

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