Dealing with Spam

Spammers are continually thinking of new ways to get their junk mail through to you, on the basis that if they get a few responses from thousands or even millions of mails, then the campaign will have paid for itself as it costs them virtually nothing to send. There are 5 main options to stopping spam:

1. Prevent the spammers from getting your mail address in the first place.
2. Stop spam on the server
3. Stop spam using message rules
4. Using a dedicated anti spam programme.
5. Using Black lists and White Lists

Stopping spammers getting or guessing your e-mail address

There are a number of reasons why you get junk mail but the two main ones are:

1. Spammers send their mail to a domain name list they have acquired (all domain names are freely available by checking the registrars) and then they 'guess' a common prefix (like sales@) for example.

OR

2. You have completed an online form (particularly on American or foreign websites) and given your e-mail address, which has subsequently been sold on for use.

To avoid spammers getting your details in the first place take the following actions:

Stopping the first one is easy -you simply have to have an unusual prefix like 'enquiries' instead of 'info'

To stop the second one you should never use your real e-mail address for online forms. Ask us to create an 'alias' to the name and use that instead. Then if you start getting spam to the alias we can simply delete it and set up a new one. For example if your genuine e-mail address is mail2@yourdomain.co.uk we could set up an alias of aps@yourdomain.co.uk (or anything you wish) which you use to fill in forms. This would be collected at the same time as the genuine mail but could be changed when necessary, without affecting, or having to change, your genuine mail address.

Dealing with spam on the server (your mailbox)

Once spammers have your genuine e-mail address you either have to change it, or, if this is not possible, deal with it using spam filters on the server or in Outlook or other mail programmes.

Dealing with spam on the server will slow down the delivery of your mail so any actions you can take on your machine will mean we only have to have a weak spam filter on your account.As we only provide business e-mail our own filters are deliberately kept to a moderate level, unless instructed otherwise by the customer, as we do not wish to delete any genuine mail.

We generally delete spam but sometimes it is marked ****SPAM**** in the subject line. If you have been able to verify that the mail marked in this way is all spam, then you can ask us to automatically delete it. We can also strengthen the mail filter considerably if required, but you would need to check the spam mail for a while to ensure we are still only catching real spam.

Dealing with spam in your mail programme using message rules

Meanwhile, if you get fed up looking at the same old spam mail, going through it and deleting it, then filtering your mail directly in your mail programme can put most of it straight into the deleted' items folder. You can also filter genuine mail so that it goes into special folders for attention when required. The second option is often more useful than the first as you then know where the genuine mail is and can be more ruthless with the 'suspect' mail.

This is how it's done in Outlook Express, Windows mail and Windows Live mail and but all mail programmes offer a similar facility. (Outlook has the option under 'Tools' then 'Rules and Alerts'):

1. In Outlook Express go to the 'tools' menu, go down to 'message rules' and then click on 'mail' in the sub menu and a new window opens.

2. First of all you can click in the 'Blocked senders' tab. In here you can put the addresses of 'genuine' business senders (insurance companies for example) that you wish to automatically delete because you are never going to be interested in their products. (There is no point in putting spam addresses in here as spammers rarely use the same name twice).

3. Now click on the 'mail rules' tab. In here you can assign folders for genuine mail to drop into or send all kinds of spam to the 'deleted items' folder.

4. To generate a rule click on the 'New' button.

You then have to specify the criteria that the mail has to meet for certain actions to be taken.

5. Lets suppose that you are always receiving mail in which the subject line contains the same details for example: 'clear your debts today'.

In this instance under section 1 you would tick the 2nd box ('where the subject line contains specific words') and under the Actions you would tick a further option for example: 'move it to the specific folder'.

6. Notice that as you ticked these boxes the details were added in the 3rd box or 'rule description'. Now click on the underlined phrase: "contains specific words" and a new window opens. In here type the relevant word(s) - in this instance 'debt'. Then click the 'add' button and then 'OK'.
Now the rule description is specific.

7. Next click on 'specified' folder and a list of folders appears. If you want to delete the mail click on 'deleted items' folder and then 'OK'. If you wish to create a new folder press the 'new folder' button, type in a folder name and click 'OK'.

8. Now the rule is complete you can give it a name under item 4 or leave the default name suggested by the programme (usually 'New Mail Rule # 1). Click 'OK' and that's it.

By setting up a category '(where the subject line' or 'the message body contains words' for example) that contains all the usual suspects: pharmacy, drugs and lots of other unrepeatable words, much of the rubbish will go into the deleted items folder automatically and genuine mail will go into the appropriate folder(s) personal, sales etc.

You can setup mail rules for all kinds of received mail and you no longer have to wade through loads of useless junk - or at the very least –less useless junk!

Dealing with spam in your mail programme using Junk Filter (Available in Outlook, Windows Mail and Windows Live Mail only)

You can setup mail rules for all kinds of received mail and you no longer have to wade through loads of useless junk - or at the very least –less useless junk!

Outlook Express doesn't have a built in junk mail filter but all later operating systems (Vista, Windows 7 and Outlook). It is set up by default but you can adjust it easily as follows:

Widows Mail (Vista) Go to 'Tools' then 'Junk E-mail Options' and adjust

Windows Live mail (Windows 7) Go to 'Tools' then 'Safety Options' and adjust as above.

Outlook (from 2003) Go to 'Action' then 'Junk E-mail options' and then adjust as necessary .

Using Black lists and White Lists.

We must say from the outset that for stopping spammers 'Black Lists' are not too good. This is because all spammers change their sending address at will and on a rotating basis. So you stop them this morning and you get the same spam message in the afternoon from a different sender.

The time to use black lists is if you are receiving lots of messages from genuine senders, that you no longer wish to receive. For example car offers or shop discounts. These work because they nearly always come from the same addresses.

White lists are much more useful because you can add all of your address book and so you won't miss important messages from contacts or friends and family.

It is a never ending battle but using the above steps you should reduce any spam considerably.

Updated 01.12.09