

20 Words That Kill - At Least When It Comes to Spam Filters

By Alexandria K. Brown

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Spam, spam, spam. It's terrible not only for those of us on the receiving end, but for those of us who SEND e-mail.

This deluge of irritating junk has unfortunately interfered with legitimate e-zine publishers, because we're caught in the anti-spam crossfire. If you publish any type of e-mail publication, there's a likely chance that your e-zine is NOT reaching a portion of your readers. Why? Their Internet service provider (ISP) or e-mail program uses a spam filter.

These software programs search for words and phrases that are typical of spam and assign each incoming e-mail a "score." If your e-mail has too many of these words and phrases, you receive a high score, and you may be blocked.

TOP 20 "KILLER" WORDS/PHRASES YOU MAY BE USING

While there are other words that will cost you more "points" than these do (e.g. sexual phrases), here are the most common "trigger" words and phrases that you may be using in your e-zine:

1. amazing
2. cancel at any time
3. check or money order
4. click here
5. congratulations
6. dear friend
7. e-mail marketing
8. for only (\$)
9. free (including toll-free)
10. great offer
11. guarantee
12. increase sales
13. order now
14. promise you

15. risk free
16. special promotion
17. this is not spam
18. to be removed
19. unsubscribe
20. winner

WHAT'S A PUBLISHER TO DO?

You have two choices when it comes to beating the filters. One is to avoid using these words and phrases altogether. I've found that hard to do. For example, in a recent issue, I discussed how to use your e-zine to increase business. Unfortunately the word "increase" cost me a fat 1.4 points in SpamAssassin, one of the most popular filter programs.

Your second choice is to disguise these words and phrases in clever ways by inserting keyboard symbols within them and/or replacing a letter in them with a symbol. The trick is not to make it too cryptic -- you want your readers to be able to understand what you're saying. For example, in my e-zine, I use "fr*ee" for free.

While some spam filters pick up on this trick and penalize you for doing it by adding onto your score, I've found that the points this tactic costs you penalize you much less than using the words and phrases themselves. It's not a perfect solution, but it's working for now.

TEST BEFORE YOU SEND

It's a great idea to test how YOUR e-zine stacks up before you send it out. The good news is you can do this for FREE.

Lyris' Content Checker (<http://www.lyris.com/contentchecker/>) tells you how your e-zine ranks in Spam Assassin. All you do is copy your e-zine text and paste it into the box on their site. They'll run your free report and e-mail a copy to you. It usually arrives within minutes.

The report will tell you exactly which words are costing you points. Usually you should only be concerned if your score is over 5 points. If so, you can either delete those words or disguise them, as I mentioned above.

I test each issue of my e-zines in Content Checker before I publish them, and often I'm surprised (and relieved) that my score is low. That makes me a happy publisher. :)

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alexandria K. Brown, "The E-zine Queen," is author of the award-winning manual, "Boost Business With Your Own E-zine" and the publisher of the e-zine, "Publish for Profits." To learn more about her book and FREE tips, teleclasses, and resources, visit <http://www.EzineQueen.com> .

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