

# If Spam Vigilantes Break Out of Cyberspace...

By David Leonhardt

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Avoid common search engine mistakes <http://www.TheHappyGuy.com/SEO.html>

The following is based on a true story. Any resemblance to what is today happening on the Internet is, sadly, a figment of my own personal experience.

I found myself returning to the office at 9:50 p.m. I walked to my office door. I placed the key in the keyhole. It would not turn. After several tries, I peeked through the blinds.

Everything was gone! My furniture. My computer. My files. Even my family photos.

I called my landlord. "Hold the line a moment," he said. "Aha, here's the problem. We are just moving your office to a new floor. It should be another hour."

"What?!" I cried. "You're moving me without even letting me know? What about my business? I automatically process orders from around the world 24 hours a day."

I felt sick. I went home to get some sleep.

I was up at 5:30 a.m. After taming the growling beasts in my stomach, I rushed to work.

No office. I checked every floor. It was still missing in action. By 10:00 a.m., I was able to reach my landlord.

"Yes, we've moved it to another floor. It usually takes a day to get everything set up. It should be ready for you sometime later today."

"But it's MY business," I protested.

"Check back later."

When I got home, a message from my landlord was waiting for me: "The agent you spoke with was not aware that your office has been sanctioned for junk mail abuse. Please email our abuse department for further details."

I dialed immediately.

"Hello, billing department."

"Is this the abuse department?" I asked.

"Let me check your file." After a few minutes, Billing Lady returned. "It seems our courier provider told us to shut you down for sending junk mail."

"But I don't send junk mail," I protested.

"I am sure you did."

"Can I see the proof, please?"

"Sorry, we don't have a copy."

"Can I please speak with someone in your abuse department?"

"Sorry, I can't connect you. You have to email them," she replied. "They don't even have telephones. Imagine the abuse they would take if they did?"

Really? I could not imagine why. I emailed the abuse department. It took them just 35 minutes to inform me that they would respond to my email within 24 hours. Weeks later, I still have not heard back from them.

I headed to the bar and grill across the street to tame, once again, those growling beasts in my stomach.

"Would you believe my business just got shut down for sending junk mail I did not even send?" I asked of the customer next to me.

"Don't I know it? I used to be a spam cop. We shut websites down all the time for sending unsolicited email. We never bothered checking if the complaints were legit. Didn't last long, though," he moaned.

"Why not?"

"One day I walked into my boss' office and spoke to him."

"So?"

"It was unsolicited. I was fired on the spot. By the time I got back, there was a photocopy machine where my desk used to be."

"So where do you work now?"

"Nowhere. How can anybody find a job if they can't send an unsolicited resume."

"But doesn't every exchange begin with an unsolicited message," I asked.

"Welcome to the post-Internet world. The greatest communications tool of all time ended communications forever."

"But what can we do about it?" I wanted to know.

"I don't know about you," he said as he slipped into his jacket. "But I'm off to the freedom-of-speech bureau to report an unsolicited conversation. They should be here soon to staple your mouth shut."

David Leonhardt is The Happy Guy, and author of "Don't Get Banned By The Search Engines": <http://thehappyguy.com/SEO.html> . Visit his website at <http://TheHappyGuy.com> .

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