

The 4 Ws of Junk E-mail

By Niall Roche

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Junk e-mail or spam has become the scourge of the modern computer world. It eats bandwidth. Spam is like a disease. It doesn't care about age, religion, wealth. It doesn't discriminate. Junk e-mail affects us all.

There are 4 keys to the junk mail question – Who, What, Where and Why.

Who they are

The typical profile of a junk mail sender is as follows. Male, 18 – 30 years of age, single, technically competent and with little regard for their status as a public nuisance. There are female junk mailers out there but, unfortunately, this is predominantly a male preserve.

What they use to send spam

There are many tools available to the spam merchant. The main ones are e-mail extractors, newsgroup harvesters and CD lists.

E-mail extractors are programs which wander around the Internet gathering e-mail addresses from websites and often from web based forums (unprotected forums). A “good” e-mail extractor can gather 15,000 e-mail addresses per hour.

Newsgroup harvesters are programs which search through newsgroups for valid e-mail addresses. Most newsgroups users are aware of this and take measures to counteract these harvesting programs. Despite these measures a newsgroup harvester application can gather 20,000 – 30,000 e-mail addresses in an hour.

CD lists are one of the worst sources. 90 million e-mail addresses available on a single CD for as little as \$20. A lot of the addresses on these CDs would be junk (many would no longer exist) but an equally large number of these addresses would be valid. A CD like this is a junk mailers dream.

Where they do it from

Those involved in sending out bulk e-mail are “entrepreneurs” or at least they think so. The vast majority of those involved in the spam business are self-employed and work from home. Sending spam is almost the ideal home based business. You name your hours and the business itself is almost automatic. Maximum gain from minimum effort.

Why they do it in the first place

Their motivation is money. Considerable amounts of cash actually. Each spammer who sends out

1,000,000 junk e-mails is certain of approximately 100 sales. Many of the products they sell are worth \$50 - \$100 dollars to them in commission. Yes. Shocking isn't it? The average bulk mailer earns in excess of \$100,000 per year! Maximum return for minimum effort. Unless of course you get caught and get jail time.

The author ,Niall Roche, is the content administrator for <http://www.spam-site.com> .

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