

Spam: Letting Your Legislators Know

By Richard Lowe

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Are you tired of receiving massive volumes of spam? I know that I am fed up with receiving countless spam emails every single day. It's gotten to the point where I receive ten spam messages for every valid message (I get about a hundred valid messages per day). Wow! That's a lot of spam.

What do I do? Well, I make good use of SpamKiller and Spamcop.net, I never reply to spam message or ask to be removed and I never, ever purchase anything based upon receiving spam.

There is more to be done. These method all depend upon the receiver doing something, taking some action, to filter out the messages. However, the problem remains.

Let's say a spammer sends out a million copies of an email. Those million messages must be routed (sent) all over the internet, each message passing through one or a dozen servers to get to their final destinations. So in addition to annoying (potentially) one million people, the spammer also uselessly "borrowed" resources several million times from many servers. While sending one email is a negligible hit on a server, sending millions of messages can make a noticeable dent in performance.

As I said, you can just delete these message when they arrive, you can filter them using tools such as SpamKiller, and you can report their senders to their ISP's (it's so rewarding to find out that you've caused a spammers account to be canceled).

There is still more than you can do, if you want to become active in the war on spam. And make no mistake, this is a war. The spammers are the equivalent of the Nazi scum in World War II

(completely unethical, evil and amoral), the ISP's are the allies, and you and me are the innocent bystanders who occasionally get whacked by a stray bullet or artillery shell.

You can let your legislators know what you want. Believe it or not, your representatives (in all areas of government) do pay attention to the desires of their constituents (that's you and me). If you want to be heard, however, you have to talk (seems obvious, but how many people complain about government yet never even let anyone in power know about their complaints?)

Okay, here are some tips to follow when sending a letter to one of your representatives.

1) Find the correct representative. Do a little research. In other words, send a letter to your own Senator, not the one clear across the country that you saw on television.

2) Don't bother sending emails. Your representatives are totally overwhelmed with email. In addition, sending an email is so easy that they have gotten into the habit of just ignoring it.

3) Write just one page (two pages is the maximum).

4) Write legibly or type. Handwritten letters seem more personal, while typewritten letters appear businesslike. Choose the proper format for the effect you want to achieve.

5) State your purpose in the first paragraph.

6) If you are writing about a bill, include the name and number.

7) Be factual.

8) Avoid emotional arguments.

9) Do not spam your legislators (seems obvious, doesn't it).

10) Treat them with respect.

11) Include your name and address. Anonymous letters tend to get thrown away.

12) Do not demand support. Asking tends to get a better response than demanding.

13) The suggested style is:

The Honorable _____
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
Dear Senator _____

The Honorable _____
United States House of Representative
Washington, D.C. 20515
Dear Representative _____

(Begin e-mail by Dear Representative _____ or Dear Senator _____)

14) Spend some time learning about your representative so you can know in advance what is important to him or her.

In your letter, inform the representative of your concern and suggest how you would like it handled. You might say something like "dear senator Billy-bob, I am one of your constituents. I feel that spam emails has become a major problem and I would like you to do something about it." You could go on to cite why it is a problem, some possible or acceptable solutions (do you want a bill passed or perhaps one stopped) and so on.

This is how our representatives find out what we want them to do. So by all means, let them know your feelings, especially about spam. This way, they are more likely to do the right thing.

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