

Bane or Boon

By Bob Osgoodby

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Bob Osgoodby
bob@adv-marketing.com

Advanced Marketing <http://adv-marketing.com>

Email to some is simply a way to contact friends and family, and to keep in touch. To others, it is a very important method of communicating with business associates.

Unfortunately, those who send out unsolicited ads have created a problem for both. It seems the amount of spam received daily increases geometrically, and try as we might, we just can't keep ahead of the game.

Let's talk about some of the more serious offenders. We have all received email, and tried to respond, only to have the response returned as undeliverable. These people forge an email address, and are basically dishonest. Anyone who does business with their ilk, deserves what they get.

High up on the list of "pains in the neck" are people who list an auto-responder as their return address, and program it to send out a series of emails on a regular basis. If you reply to them, you will get at least five or more emails from them over a short period of time. These people are also dishonest as they are trying to continue to sell you something, even though you have asked them to cease and desist.

Another winner in this "hit parade" is the "fresh from the farm newbie" who harvests (or if they are really dumb buys a list) thousands of names and starts sending out unsolicited email. Thinking they have found the keys to the vault, they start sending out spam by the thousands. They really take offense when their ISP (Internet Service Provider) cancels their account.

And don't you just love the "braintrust" who sends out his/her thousands of emails and shows the email address of everyone they sent it to. Spammers who may receive their ad have just added another thousand or so names to their list.

Let's look at the flip side of this coin. First let's agree that we don't like spam. Some people however, really "flip out" and make it their holy grail to get even. In the early days of the Internet, one solution was to send back hundreds of copies of a long document hoping to fill their mailboxes. That worked for awhile, but modern email readers let someone preview an email and they quickly delete this "reverse spam".

Another group sends complaints to the ISP of the offender. If the spammer used a forged address however, they quickly learn that this is a waste of time. They receive back a very nice note from the ISP, telling them that the address they are complaining about doesn't exist on their server. They

stop doing this very quickly, but still hate spam.

They then buy software that will parse a note and send a complaint to every URL or email address contained in the spam. Or worse yet, they complain to some self-appointed guardian of the web who does it for them. This is OK if it is a legitimate piece of spam, but I have seen this done by someone who subscribed to a Newsletter, had a very senior moment, forgot they had subscribed, and did it to the publisher.

This means that the ISP of every single URL or email address contained in the newsletter gets sent a complaint. This includes everyone who is identifiable in the Newsletter such as the authors of the articles, the advertisers in the Newsletter and anyone else who happens to have their web site listed there. Hey folks this just isn't fair.

There are too many other ways to solve the problem of spam arriving in your mailbox. First of all, much spam is generated if you use your email address on the web or in a chat room. Your best bet is get free "throw away" addresses, and when the need for the address doesn't exist any longer, simply cancel it.

If you own your own domain, use an address that you tie in with your advertising. When that starts to get overloaded, and it will, change it in your ads and filter messages to the old address to your trash bin.

Is it a bane or is it a boon. If you let it control you, it falls into the first category. But if you use it intelligently, it can be a most valuable asset to you and your business.

Bob publishes the free weekly "Your Business" Newsletter Visit his Web Site at <http://adv-marketing.com> to subscribe. As a bonus, get 40,000 FREE E-Books from Larry Dotson, when you visit <http://www.ldpublishing.com>

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