

Spam!

By: G.C.Silva

As a computer consultant in the field, I see just about everything.

Most of us rely on E-Mail as a vital means of communication these days. Whether it is with family, friends or work related; E-Mail is here to stay. Statistics show that as of March 31, 2009, 94% of all E-Mail was SPAM according to a division of Google dedicated to tracking just such things.

Spam comes in many forms. Some solicited, some not. Whenever you visit a website that asks you for your E-Mail address, unless it explicitly says that they will not share your E-Mail address, consider it available to just about anyone. Sometimes the company shares it with just their affiliates but then who do those affiliates share it with? You might have signed up for E-Mail alerts from your favorite retailer but now you're receiving E-Mail from various web sites that sell similar products.

Another way to get unsolicited E-Mail is by posting your E-Mail in chat forums or newsgroups. Dedicated computers are designed to do nothing but harvest E-Mail addresses from these sorts of postings. These E-Mail addresses are then in turn sold in bulk to various agencies that specialize in spam.

I am not sure how people end up getting unsolicited E-Mail to refinance a home they do not own or an E-Mail for some type of wonder drug claiming to cure every ailment known to humankind, but I can tell you you are not alone in this deluge of junk filling our virtual mailboxes.

Recently Spam has accounted for a greater means to contract viruses. The way this works is the recipient of the email is lured into clicking on a link in a spam message that directs them to a page that contains a fake news headline. This headline could be sports related, maybe a sale on some type of common item, or even describing a crisis or disaster in a major city. The lure of saving money or seeing breaking news makes it enticing for the user to click the link. This in turn downloads a virus, infecting the computer.

So what can we all do? Some people may have a work E-Mail address and that is what it should strictly be used for. Remember, the E-Mail address belongs to your employer, not you. Use it for work purposes only.

For personal E-Mail, I tell people they should have two or more email addresses. One E-Mail address for family correspondence, important stuff like banking and bill paying, and another E-Mail address for everything else. You can also have an E-Mail address dedicated to certain uses like mailing lists, social-networking sites, or groups of friends that like to forward you every little thing. If you start getting too much junk "Spam" mail at a certain address, you can just delete the account and let just the folks you want to know what the new E-Mail address is.

Another tip is to create an E-Mail address that is not an easy name to guess. Sometimes creators of spam (Spam Bots) will send to david@aol.com, david1@aol.com david2@aol.com, and so on knowing that most of the E-Mails might not work, but know that some of them will. Something like david327b@aol.com might seem like an odd E-Mail address but the Spam bots might not guess it.

Safe surfing, treating your E-Mail address like your phone number and having multiple E-Mail addresses are a few good ways to cut down on Spam.

Glenn Silva, owner of Fairhaven Computer Repair and HTE Computer Consulting+ has been servicing local individuals and businesses in the community for 20+ years. He is self-syndicated and his column can be read in numerous printed and online sources. He can be contacted at: your-computerguy@comcast.net.