

Network Notables

Net Solutions Technology Center, LLC (843) 525 - 6469

You've Got ... SPAM!

Special Interest Articles:

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The average e-mail user gets about 50 pieces of junk e-mail each week. Large Internet Service Providers (ISPs), like AOL, Earthlink and locally, Internet Services of the Low Country, receive up to 1,000,000,000 a day. All that spam costs all of us money. Your Internet service can cost an extra \$3 a month due to the additional bandwidth needed just for spam!

What is spam, and how do spammers operate?

Spam is slang for unsolicited commercial e-mail. You didn't ask for it, and you cannot readily unsubscribe from it. It's the junk mail of the Internet, only much more ominous because it can contain viruses, scams, and inappropriate pictures and messages.

Spammers buy e-mail addresses for about \$25 per million. They earn money based on how many opens and clicks they get from the e-mail. Sending e-mail is so cheap that spammers can turn a profit even if only one in 100,000 recipients responds. Industry sources say a single spammer sends, on average, nearly 12 billion e-mails a year.

Spammers will hijack smaller ISPs or web servers to launch their spam. Some filters will blacklist all e-mail senders from that ISP, even innocent ones. All e-mail from anyone you know who uses that ISP

will be filtered. Unfortunately, the blacklist method doesn't even stop spammers, who typically only send one blast from each hijacked ISP.

Fighting back

ISPs, like Internet Services of the Low Country (ISLC), have launched an attack against spammers. Spam filtering software is available to try to prevent spam from hitting the user's mailbox.

Most of these filters work in a similar manner. The main change you'll see is an additional folder for your questionable mail. E-mail considered spam by the filter will be routed to that folder instead of to your inbox. After two or three weeks, the ISP automatically deletes all the messages in the folder.

ISLC is currently using Postini as an e-mail filtering service. Depending on the configuration settings, Postini scans for e-mail viruses, inappropriate content and junk e-mail. Postini also checks the sending address to verify if it is a valid e-mail address, and checks to see if it has been originated from a known spamming site. Known spamming sites are placed on blacklists.

If a virus is found or the e-mail message is determined to be spam, the message is placed in quarantine. You

don't want an e-mail message that may have been mistaken for spam to just disappear. Quarantining allows you to view the message online and determine if the message was quarantined by mistake. Administration is required to review the messages to determine if they should be deleted or sent to the user.

What isn't spam?

Sometimes filters will capture e-mail that isn't spam. The most commonly captured e-mail is from companies who send out newsletters, subscriptions, and catalog notices online. Many mail-order retailers like L.L. Bean, J. Crew, and Victoria's Secret send e-mail catalogs, sale notices, and coupons. These messages aren't spam because you asked to receive them when you registered. And if the company is scrupulous, you may unsubscribe anytime you change your mind. Industry leaders and Internet retail companies are working together to establish a standard of commercial e-mail behavior that ensures you receive only what you want and nothing that you don't.

For more on spam contact Net Solutions at (843) 525 - 6469.

Smart Ways to Fight Spam

Don't post your primary e-mail address online; create an alternate e-mail address for public interactions.

Participating in Internet newsgroups or chat rooms makes it easy for someone using computer programs to harvest your e-mail address and sell it to junk e-mail senders.

To reduce your exposure, set up a second Yahoo or Hotmail e-mail address to use when participating in online forums, registering with Web sites, entering contests, or filling out forms on the Internet. Ideally, this should be a unique address with both letters and numbers, to help avoid mail sent scattershot to many common e-mail user names.

Share your primary e-mail address only with friends, family and people you know.

Keep your primary e-mail address private.

Option (opt) out of being listed in online member directories.

Add valid e-mail addresses and subscriptions to your address book.

This tells most filters that you want to receive this e-mail.

Review a Web site's privacy policy before doing business online.

When you sign up for Web-based services such as online banking, shopping, or newsletters, review the privacy policy closely. Some sites will automatically assume the right to share your e-mail address. Responsible sites will offer you a way to opt out.

Ignore spam.

Spammers often combine names randomly with popular e-mail services (for example, bob@AOL.com) in hopes of finding valid e-mail addresses. By responding to the junk e-mail, even to unsubscribe, you may be inadvertently verifying that the message has reached a working e-mail address. Responding to unsolicited e-mail from unknown senders, even asking to be removed from their lists, may only encourage more spam. Unless you are unsubscribing from a distribution list that you signed up for or you know the sender of the message, discard it without responding.

For more ways to fight spam contact Net Solutions at (843) 525 – 6469.

To combat the onslaught of spam in your inbox, follow these guidelines.

Spyware: Just Click NO!

Does your Internet browser keep bringing up a different home page than the one you set? Your computer may be infested with spyware!

Spyware is any software that uses your Internet connection in the background without your knowledge or permission. Simply put; programs are installed on your computer without your knowledge and report your web browsing habits to marketing databases.

This information, among other things, targets you for annoying spam email and popup advertising. But more insidious, spyware that is deeply embedded in your system can degrade performance and cause system damage.

Those who use free file sharing software like KaZaa or Morpheus to download music, pictures, files etc. are most susceptible; but just visiting a Web site or clicking on a Web ad can install a spyware application like Gator or Hotbar.

Cleanup software is available to rid your computer of spyware but should be used with caution. You can often inadvertently delete files your computer needs to run properly. Preventing spyware on your computer is easier than trying to get rid of it.

First, ensure your system cannot and will not install programs automatically over

the Internet or launch them automatically from email.

Ensure your operating system is fully patched against any known security vulnerabilities by applying all critical Microsoft Windows Updates.

Configure your browser to use a medium security setting or higher.

From that point, avoid clicking on those tantalizing web ads and do not click "OK", "Yes", or "Run This Program" to anything unless you fully understand the implications of what it is trying to do.

For more help contact Net Solutions at (843) 525 – 6469.

"...just visiting a Web site or clicking on a Web ad can install a spyware application"

Microsoft® Takes Aim at Spam

Microsoft is strongly committed to ending today's spam epidemic. In addition to working with government and industry leaders to combat spam, Microsoft's latest products have integrated anti-spam technology.

In the 2nd half of this year Microsoft will release Outlook® 2003 and Microsoft Exchange Server® 2003. Both popular email management products

include new anti-spam features.

Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 effectively manages email for organizations with a server network. The new version, out this year, introduces anti-spam and antivirus features in addition to an array of enhanced features.

Microsoft Outlook 2003, a component of Microsoft Office® 2003, includes features and functionality

designed to help block much of the junk e-mail messages that you receive. These features give you more control over the kinds of messages delivered to your Inbox, and from whom you want to receive messages.

Microsoft is working to create new anti-spam technologies that are even more precise, easier to use, and adaptable. Microsoft is committed to integrating anti-spam technology into more of their products.

Microsoft®
News

New Versions of Popular Microsoft® Products Coming Soon!

New versions of Microsoft's popular server and desktop office products will be generally available in the fourth quarter of this year.

Windows® Server 2003 is the fastest, most reliable, most secure Windows server operating system ever offered by Microsoft. VeriTest, an independent test lab, has found that Windows Server 2003 outperforms Microsoft® Windows 2000 Server and Microsoft Windows NT® Server 4.0 by a dramatic

margin—typically performing two to three times faster on the same hardware.

Exchange Server is used by more businesses than any other email product. Microsoft® Exchange 2003 is the highest-quality release of Exchange Server ever and provides significant feature improvements over Microsoft® Exchange 2000.

Small Business Server® 2003 packages Microsoft's suite of new server products. SBS 2003 integrates the server operating system, e-mail, fax,

database, and shared Internet into one cost effective platform that's easy to deploy.

New Office® 2003 Editions, including Word, EXCEL, PowerPoint, Outlook, etc., do not simply deliver new features—they provide greater control over documents.

Microsoft Outlook® 2003 provides enhanced usability features for reading, managing and organizing e-mail messages, schedules, tasks, notes, contacts, and other information.

Microsoft®
CERTIFIED
Partner

A Word to Microsoft® Windows 98 Users

Just a reminder to Windows® 98 users; Microsoft no longer markets Windows 98 and all active Microsoft support for Windows 98 will end January 16, 2004.

Existing applications will still run under Windows 98. But as new versions are released, like the new

Microsoft products, these may not run under Windows 98. For example, beta versions of Office® 2003 require Windows® 2000 or Windows® XP as the operating system.

To stay current with Microsoft products, consider upgrading workstations from Windows 98 to Windows 2000 or XP. If your workstation does not

meet minimum requirements for Windows 2000 or XP additional upgrades may be required.

In that case, consider replacing your Windows 98 workstation with a new Windows XP machine.

For more information on Windows compatibility contact Net Solutions at (843) 525 - 6469.

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HOT TIP: Hurricane Preparedness for Technology

It's that time of year! Net Solutions recommends your plans include the following precautions:

- Have current, up-to-date Flood Insurance in force. Check it annually prior to Hurricane Season.
- Designate a focal point for technology preparation and review procedures annually with your employees prior to Hurricane Season.
- Insure all important data is stored to the server

and run a successful tape backup of your server. Distribute diskettes for backing up any data stored on individual machines. Make sure to take the tapes and diskette backups off site.

- Properly shut down each machine and the server. Power off the machines.
- Unplug all electronic equipment from wall sockets and all cables from wall jacks. Put system units and all equipment up off the floor.
- Cover workstation components with sheets of

plastic or large trash bags.

- In the event of an evacuation, be sure to take the backups and if possible, take the server or system unit with you.

Upon your return and the safe restoration of power, plug in your equipment and start your PCs and network. Should you experience any problems, call Net Solutions Technology Center at 525 - 6469 for assistance.

About Net Solutions Technology Center, LLC...

Net Solutions Technology Center has been providing the Lowcountry with the finest in technology solutions since 1995.

Whether you need a single PC or a network that can reach around your organization or around the world, Net Solutions is a full

service technology company dedicated to providing our clients the very best technical expertise and individualized service.

Our team of consultants, system designers and service technicians are nationally certified "A+" for

DOS/Microsoft Windows and include Microsoft Certified Systems Engineers and Cisco Certified Network Administrators. These credentials mean the highest level of consulting, services and support available.

Our Newsletter...

To receive our newsletter online and to provide feedback or ideas for future issues, please email us at info@easierway.com or contact us at (843) 525-6469.

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