

Three Faces of SPAM

By Sandi Moses

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Like everybody who will ever read this, I get spam in my e-mail. Mine seems to fall into one of three categories. The first is the Nigerian scam about helping some poor, pathetic soul collect megabucks, supposedly from someone who has died and left a fortune. I'm not sure what is worse: that there are people desperate enough to believe those messages, or that there are people despicable enough to prey on the desperate. The net result is the despicable con the desperate into sending money which the desperate will never see again.

The second type comes from people who sound innocent enough. They have a product or a business or a service or something else that is perfectly legitimate. They surf the web, find one of my sites, find the "contact us" link, and send me information about whatever they have to offer. I suppose, in their minds, it isn't any different than walking down the street or going through the telephone book writing down addresses, and then sending out bulk business mail with the same offer. They could get the same information for more money and less time by buying a mailing list. THAT is perfectly legitimate. Harvesting e-mail addresses off of web sites is NOT. Spam is officially defined as "unsolicited commercial electronic mail." The key word is "unsolicited." If I didn't ask for it and you send it anyway, it is unsolicited. When people harvest e-mail addresses off of web sites and then send commercial messages, that, by definition, is spam. I report them to my ISP and you should, too.

The third type isn't so innocent. These people, like the second type of people already discussed, surf the web, find sites, and harvest the e-mail addresses from the "contact us" link. Instead of starting out by sending you what they have to offer, they get devious, sneaky, and just plain under-handed. They send you a message asking for more information about whatever you have to offer on your site. When you graciously respond, it turns out they couldn't care less about what you have to offer. The ONLY thing they want is to confirm your e-mail address so they can start to dump offers on you, hoping you will buy something from them. Nasty trick.

Let me give you an example from one that once came across my screen. It seemed to be from a nice lady with homey graphics and nice colors in her e-mail. If my memory serves me well, she even stated that she was disabled and looking for ways to earn a living off the internet. In my mind, that's a hard combination to resist. A great deal of

effort was put into this to make it sound as if she had built an internet community around her site and services. Maybe she did; I don't know. Anyway, I was naïve enough to respond with the information she had requested. Soon solicitations for this, that, and whatever business offer, etc. began arriving in my inbox. I finally put two and two together and realized that they were from her, but I was still reluctant to report it as spam, so her messages went quietly into the trash. I mean, she seemed SO NICE! Then I got this huffy message, apparently broadcast to her entire mailing list, about how if people didn't want to receive her messages, why didn't they just unsubscribe, etc. It seems quite a few people had reported her as a spammer and she was getting into trouble. It was time for me to respond, so I told her, bluntly, that what she was sending out WAS spam. It was unsolicited. I never signed up to be on her mailing list, and no doubt the people who had reported her never signed up to be on her mailing list, either. I only responded to a request FROM HER for information and that in no way implied that I wanted to be on her mailing list or that I wanted to receive her offers. She must have gotten the message because I have received nothing else from her.

So how about you? Are guilty of sending out e-mail to people who did not specifically request to receive offers from you or about a business that you represent? If you go around looking for e-mail addresses to harvest for your own purposes, you are guilty of sending SPAM. Instead, post your offers on your web site and market them legitimately. It's the right thing to do. When people fill out your form, they are giving you permission to send them information. Keep a record so you can defend yourself if they ever forget what they did.

If you are on the receiving end of unsolicited offers, go ahead and report them as spam. Don't feel guilty; you are not the guilty party. Just make sure you really didn't sign up for a newsletter or something and then forgot! It is soooooooooooooooooo not cool to report spam that really isn't!

E-mail SPAM: What's The Big Deal?

By Dean Phillips

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It absolutely amazes me how many people over-react to receiving e-mail SPAM.

What is this obsession...this preoccupation with SPAM?

Where are our priorities?

When it comes to SPAM, many of us are ready to support the severest anti-SPAM legislation. Yes, we want to lock up all the spammers and throw away the key! Haven't we learned by now that inviting the government to get involved with anything is a recipe for disaster?

I personally receive a couple hundred e-mails every single day. Approximately half of that is SPAM. Want to know how I deal with the problem? I hit the "delete" button and just like that, no more SPAM!

And since I have high-speed cable access, it literally only takes me a few minutes to make a hundred uninvited SPAM guests disappear. No problem!

I don't let SPAM annoy me or upset me. And I certainly don't let it ruin my day.

When you let SPAM annoy or upset you, all you're doing is letting the spammers win. However, when you use the delete button, you win! You've got the power to delete. Why not use it?

What's so hard about doing that? It's certainly a lot easier on your emotional well-being than getting upset over the situation.

Simply view SPAM as one of those minor annoyances of every day life--like reality television shows, and learn to treat it as such!

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