



White Paper: The cost of Spam is lost time

”The spam time-sink”

To reduce the productivity losses of junk e-mail and other forms of unsolicited e-mail you must ensure your company will not lose countless hours processing bad e-mail.

According to NetworkWorld 11/17/03 pg 14; Spam is going to increase 35% per year and by 2007 it will be 99% of all e-mail. The biggest expense by many times [in some cases an order of magnitude] is lost productivity.

The “Spam time-sink” comes in the following forms. This list is in descending order of severity:

- Employee time spent separating good mail from bad
- IT support time managing the problem, processing the load and helping employees configure their machines to stop it or working with employees to find quarantined messages
- Employee uncertainty, confusion, frustration and exasperation. Employees not knowing if mail was sent or received, resending of messages and employees seeing no end to the deluge of junk mail
- Employees waiting on IT to figure out if expected e-mail is held-up
- Load on corporate mail servers, processing and holding inordinate amounts of bad mail
- Load on corporate networks
- Load on the Internet

The best way to save time from unsolicited e-mail is to prevent the interruptions before they happen.

The spammers have effectively proved there is no realistic way of stopping Spam at the source so you must block it in order to prevent employee interruptions.

Effectively catching the Spam in Quarantine is the first step. Using the most robust and comprehensive Spam signature databases like Pyzor, DCC or Razor is the foundation of identifying Spam. Next using sophisticated algorithms like fuzzy logic (not exact matching like the databases above but probabilistic matching), Bayesian filtering (statistical filtering) and finally customized databases for your specific environment.

Preventing the interruption of employee work flow

Catching Spam in quarantine does significantly reduce employee interruption and does once again allow e-mail to be an effective medium. Albeit a good first step it is only that, someone still has to deal with the contents of the quarantine. You do not want the time-sink to move from the user's inbox to a central quarantine. You need a quarantine system that creates a separate quarantine for each user and a quarantine that does the following:

- Allows each user to manage their own messages [on their terms]
- Sorts messages by lowest probability of Spam, so the user sees potentially good mail first increasing the odds of finding good mail

- Makes it easy remove unwanted messages in bulk or automatically so minimal time is spent removing unwanted mail

A solution that is not a burden to your users or the IT department

You should look for a solution that lets the users manage their own mail. They will do the best job so long as the mechanism is understandable.

The tools a user needs to manage their mail are:

- An effective Spam collection system
- A sorting algorithm that lists the good mail first and bad mail second
- An easy method for deleting all the bad mail in big blocks
- An easy method for blacklisting known bad senders
- An easy method for whitelisting known good senders
- And all of this configurable via a browser

The tools the IT department needs to manage the bad mail are:

- A system that unburdens the network and the mail servers
- A system that links into the authentication schemes of your corporate network so two sets of logins and passwords are not needed
- A system that automatically blocks known bad mail
- A system that automatically purges collected and verified bad mail
- A system that does not put the IT department between the users and their e-mail

Conclusion

The problem of Spam is lost time due to conventional and ineffective e-mail systems.

To make e-mail communication effective you must reduce the time and effort required. E-mailing must be made easy again.

First and foremost you must keep your employees mailboxes free of clutter and second you must make it easy to block and remove bad mail.

You must catch bad e-mail before it reaches the servers and the employee computers. You must not make the solution a daily task for IT. You must build into your solution automated systems for purging bad mail and make it easy for an employee to tell their good mail from the bad mail.

Written by:

Anthony Iacobucci

COO, Message Harbor

ai@messageharbor.com