

President's Corner

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What about all those pop up windows you get when you're browsing on the Internet? I searched the Internet **once** for a hotel, and now when surfing anything related to travel, I get 3 or 4 pop ups trying to sell me hotel accommodations. I looked for "Vegas" and now it's 5 gambling online casino pop ups. Every time you close a pop-up window, more appear in its place. Some of them wait (lurking) behind a normal window and surprise you with a delayed appearance. How do I stop all of this annoying invasion of my time?

I think everyone's frustrated by their inability to do anything to slow the flow of spam and other forms of unwanted advertising. I don't know what can be done, but something has got to give, and it will probably get worse before it gets better. In the meantime, if you have kids with access to email, now is the time to get vigilant. Remember, summer is here and many of our kids will be online constantly.

So when you connect to your email and that annoying voice says, "**You've got mail!**", it should really say, "**You've got spam! And lots of it!**" 

"You've got Mail" ... uh, you mean spam!

Monday morning, I wake up full of grit and energy. I sign on to my email remotely, bright and early to get a jump start on the week. "You have new mail!" my computer announces with a friendly voice (which I will find a way to strangle some day) and my heart sinks like a stone. I connect to my email and my inbox is overflowing with new mail, and people are waiting on my replies. I swear my inbox was clean Friday night. I get 3 screens full of un-read messages.

I sometimes hate email because it feels like we work our lives away in an email jail. "Get it together," I tell myself, and I start the task of sifting through the emails. I have changed my morning coffee strategy from milk and sugar, to black, to a double espresso. It gets the edge going as I read through the emails.

The first challenge is to ensure that I do not open anything that seems suspicious – the last thing I need this morning is a virus. Carefully checking one email after another, low and behold I discover more and more spam mail. There are literally dozens of spam emails in my in-box! SPAM! It not only clutters our electronic in-boxes, it frustrates me to no end. My mailbox is now so jammed with junk mail that the real messages get lost in the pile. Recently, in a span of just two days, I received more than 67 pieces of junk with subject lines like "Make a killing in real estate," and "Make \$10,000.00 weekly," or "Take control of your sex life," or "Are you feeling stressed? Let me help." (Of course, all of these are so very realistic, especially the last one.)

My problem, which I'm sure you all have as well, is excessive spam. Every day, I get dozens or more of unwanted, objectionable messages.

I do use filters but these clever scam artists always find a way around them. Is there any other way to control this junk mail avalanche?

Email filters are lousy. They let you block specific items, but today's spammers know ways around this. They can even make it look as if you're sending junk mail to yourself. Most providers out there have no effective provision for filtering subject lines or text.

The good news is that I can easily delete many of these unwanted emails, leaving only those which are truly business related. Psychologically, I am proud, since I have already processed 50 of my emails with the stroke of the delete key.

Total elimination of spam, unfortunately, is inconceivable – no matter what anyone does. But everyone's frustration over the issue is mounting, especially in the business community.

What bothers me most is what my children are seeing. I am not an over-protective parent, however I am far from thrilled with some of the emails they are exposed to. I recently asked my daughter to check my e-mail for me ... just once. After porn, free DVD advertisements and other SPAM popped up, I decided I would not ask her to do it again. People tell me, "Don't worry, they have probably seen it all before. You know what they learn on the playgrounds at school these days..." Well, I still feel these messages are inappropriate.

Spam, in my opinion, is skyrocketing with volume and I hate it all. Mortgages, cars, credit cards, Viagra, stock market picks, Nigerian money laundering, singles clubs, even anti-spam software. Sick of advertising? You bet! Sick of sex and porn? You bet! I am maaaad!