

Connected Office Whitepaper: "Why Do You Need a Spam Solution?"



Spam is a modern-day scourge.

There we've said it. That wasn't so hard was it? And that's exactly the problem... Spam is all too easy. It can, at best, be somewhat amusing at times, but most of the time it's intrusive, it's annoying, and truly does have the potential to be quite damaging.

Sure you've been intrigued by headlines like "Sauce for Dish of Sensuality", "A Strategy That Changes the Game" or "Maximum Elegance with Minimum Expenses". Yes you laughed when you saw "George Bush Pregnant". Perhaps you even pondered inane promises such as "Become the Best Man of Her Bedroom" or "Become Master of Amorous Genre"? But as a business owner, do you have time for these unwanted solicitations? Do you have the luxury of allowing your employees to sift through (literally) tens of thousands of these useless messages each year? Or perhaps the better questions are these: "does your corporate reputation matter to you?" and "does the daily functioning of your business depend on email?" To better explain what we mean by this though, let's rewind a little first...

Some history - Spam is defined as the use of electronic messaging systems (typically email) to send unsolicited bulk messages indiscriminately. Spam is a vehicle used by criminals, hackers and then unwitting victims to distribute viruses or 'phish' for personal/financial information from you or your customer's data. Viruses are spread via spam and compromise individual computers... leading to compromised systems. When a computer becomes infected it becomes a part of a 'botnet'. In information technology terms, a botnet is a collection of compromised computers (or bots) connected to the internet, that are used for malicious purposes. Once your systems have been compromised, they become 'zombies' - part of a larger network of 'bots that serve to propagate even more spam on unsuspecting victims... a nefarious cycle that can overwhelm your employees, your infrastructure and even tie up your IT support team.

The Math - Email systems and email users have been overwhelmed with spam over the last several years. Estimates say that spam makes up between 88% - 92% of all email sent. To put that in perspective, for one of our happy customers, our Connected Office Anti-Spam service blocked almost 2 million messages for their 89 employees last year - that is almost 22,500 messages per user. That is a lot of email messages to be processed by their email servers and evaluated by their employees. That also works out to **90 less email messages a day** for each employee to go through...

Even if an employee only takes 10 seconds to scan each piece of spam, it still adds up to every employee wasting at least 15 minutes a day (or 65 hours a year). If you want to **calculate your own corporate cost** in lost productivity due to spam, take your payroll, divide it by your number of employees to get an average salary, then divide that by 2000 hours to get an approximate average hourly salary. Take that, multiply it by 65 hours a year and then by multiple it again by your total number of employees to get your annual cost.

CALCULATE YOUR ANNUAL COST OF SPAM (in terms of EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY)

Step 1. AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE = (TOTAL PAYROLL)/(# of EMPLOYEES)/(2000 HOURS)

Step 2. ANNUAL COST = (AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE) X (65 HOURS PER YEAR) X (# of EMPLOYEES)

For example, if you have 20 employees and they each spend 65 hours a year @ \$30/hour in salary, your annual cost would be \$39,000. That's independent of the potential threat cost, on a daily basis, for each employee to accidentally click on a link or download a virus that could cause significant harm to your IT infrastructure or your company's reputation.

How Else Does Spam Cost You?

Spam isn't a mere annoyance for businesses anymore. It's proliferation has made it a true threat that can cost your business in many different respects:

Lost productivity - According to Ferris Research, it costs approximately \$0.04 in employee time to delete a spam email. That may not sound like a lot but if you have 20 employees who each face 90 useless emails a day (as our customers average), it adds up to more than \$25,000 over the course of a year. And it's not just the end-users that are diverted away from productive work, it's any internal IT staff or even staff knowledgeable about email that get the "What should I do with this email?"-type questions and have to respond.

IT costs - Spam eats up your corporate bandwidth and your disk storage space. This means more unnecessary IT upgrades and costs. With the growth of spammers using attachments in efforts to bypass spam filters the bandwidth/storage "arms race" continues...

Security breaches - Email continues to be a popular delivery mechanism for malware. If your systems do succumb to a malware infection, your business will be faced with a potentially expensive clean-up operation. Phishing attempts, if successful, can also lead to the exposure of sensitive information - a particularly bad scenario if you lose customer data or invaluable intellectual property.

So What's the Solution?

We've described the issues surrounding spam. We've detailed the real (hard) costs of spam and how to calculate them for yourself. We've also talked about the soft costs - the less qualified costs of losing face, losing customers or partners (i.e. if your company's domain gets blacklisted and you inr you cause virus infections in others. So how do you stop spam from damaging your company or taking up your employees' time? The first step is to subscribe to a spam solution like our **Connected Office Anti-Spam** service that takes the guesswork and headaches out of your email administration and allows you to concentrate on real emails and, quite simply, remain productive.

In conjunction with putting a service in place to block incoming threats and minimize the chances of your company becoming infected and also putting outbound recipients at risk, you should also **educate your employees**. If they are aware of the latest scams, there is a smaller chance of them unwittingly clicking on an attachment type they should be wary of (i.e. an .exe file from an unknown source). With this in mind, we encourage all small- and medium-sized business owners to take proper evaluation of their email policies and protections and join the fight against the increasingly sophisticated horde of spam artists out there trying to make a few dollars... well perhaps they are trying to make more than a few dollars... Reports now indicate that spam is costing employers over \$100 billion dolllars a year. With a proper Spam solution and policies in place you may miss out on the chance to buy cheap Rolexes or get blue diamond-shape miracle pills at cost, but you also won't come down with a nasty virus or put your company at risk.

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