

"Are Spam Filters Crippling Ezines?"

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"Are Spam Filters Crippling Ezines?"

By Bob McElwain

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A whole bunch of ezines you send to your subscribers are being trashed. Filtering software has been spreading like wildfire from ISP to ISP. The decisions these programs make are beyond your control. The question is, "Are you out of business?"

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Bob

SPAM FILTERS ARE CRIPPLING EZINES

By Bob McElwain

The growing use of software to filter incoming email to an ISP has added an unanswerable question: How many subscribers receive your ezine? For several years now, I've ignored subscriber list totals. The data is fuzzy when you look at numbers held, numbers not delivered, and so forth. I track only the number of successful deliveries. However, this number is now much less meaningful.

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Many (most?) ISPs have installed email filters to block spam and that other stuff I can't mention for fear of being blocked. If those filters bounced back to the mailing service, the addresses could be eliminated. Most are only trashed into the big black hole of cyberspace. So there's no telling how many don't get through.

Some are bounced back to me personally. Unfortunately, no email address is provided, so I can't remove it from my list. I get a particular hoot out of this, when they've blocked my newsletter, calling it spam. I wonder what they're calling the stuff they send to me.

Moral Irresponsibility In Action

Such software is a great example of irresponsibility in action. And the lack of ethics and morality of which we see far too much. The 'gods' (programmers?) have decreed we're at the mercy of computer algorithms which are primitive at best.

Analyzing the meaning of a statement in English with a computer is still in its infancy, even though many powerful minds have been working at it for many years. Current software assumes related problems have been resolved, which is absurd.

Here's What Has Happened To Me

Beginning in November in 2001, I began to notice a fall off in responses to "STAT News." Both to ads, and comments emailed to me. I didn't pay much attention at first, for things like this fluctuate.

But I did check seriously in December. Definitely down in both areas. During January and February, I was pretty much out of things due to some heavy surgery. I didn't really get back up to speed until March. By then, the downtrend in the response rate over November last year was very noticeable. Certainly in excess of 15% by any measure.

Blocking Software To The Rescue?

By March, it was also clear spam blocking software was the current rage. I believe this accounts for the drop in response I have seen. Here's why.

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Email response to the newsletter dropped by the same percentage as ad response. I track ad response accurately with software. So the only place for error in making this statement is in misjudging email response. My answer to that was to check trash and count. The percentages were almost identical, although there's not enough data to be certain.

If only ad response had dropped off, I'd have decided I needed new ads. But when both dropped by the same percentage, I had to charge it off to the spam filters.

An Up Close And Personal Experience

My ISP installed a filtering package along about April of this year. I was "automatically" enrolled. This meant I got to visit the site and look at the blocked mail. Much more

time consuming than doing so in my mailing program. Curious, however, I let it run for a time.

Surprise! Over a 9 day period, I found almost 30 messages from acquaintances, friends, peers, visitors, and subscribers blocked. Beyond notifying them that it happened, I was completely unable to say why. My hunch was, and remains, inadequate computing routines. Or inadequate programmers creating them.

When I'd had enough, I turned the filters off. Guess I should be thankful I had that option. Shoot, some folks that mean a lot to me, only write a couple times a year. And I sure don't want to miss these messages.

Another List

I maintain a mailing list of people to whom I send my articles each week. In one mailing, about half a dozen were sent back to me from AOL. Reason: Invalid DNS pointers. Gee. I wonder how visitors are reaching my site.

As mentioned, most of the mail filtered out is simply trashed. So there's no way to get a handle on this problem. I'd willingly delete email addresses, if they were returned to me. But if these packages wanted to play fair, they'd bounce to my mail list server. But being fair is not their objective.

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Alternatives

Many have decided to send only a brief message that points to a URL for an HTML version of the ezine. This won't work for all subscribers. Many don't want to move from handling email to jump onto the Web. Page views will demonstrate whether or not this is so for you.

Another plan is to refer to an autoresponder for a copy of the current issue. I don't see how this helps, for the content mailed will have to get through the same filter your newsletter would have faced directly.

Further, both ideas fail when the filtering catches something in the headers it doesn't like. As with AOL claiming my DNS pointers were flawed. Or a blacklisted IP address. How to beat such happenings is totally beyond me.

A Possible Maybe

I know many don't like attachments, but here's a thought.

Send a message which has no content. Just identify the newsletter in the subject field by name. (It has been suggested we use our full name in the From field, but I've been doing this routinely.)

Let the message contain only the URL to your HTML version. And include a .TXT version as an attachment. A click will load it to an editor on most systems. Again, though, if the "obscene" content is in the header, the message won't go through.

My Plan

I see no better alternative than to continue to grow my list and mail to it. I'll simply have to factor in a number for those arbitrarily trashed. If those into this kind of thing come up with a number, my hunch is that it will be about 25%.

When I adjust my email and ad response by 25%, the numbers agree with those in previous years. Not fact, of course. But suggestive.

Whatever this number proves to be, I'll live with it.

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And seek to be content with the percentage delivered.

Bob McElwain, author of "Your Path To Success" and "Secrets To A Really Successful Website."
For info, see

A Quick Look At Email Spam Filters

By Oliver Turner

You must be eagerly finding for a way out to stop receiving Spam mails in your inbox. Take a quick look at email spam filters to get some idea on how to check spam. There are a number of email spam filters that you can use in your computer. For official purposes, you have anti server software spam where the spam filter is located in the server level to trap all email spam. They prevent them from reaching your inbox. The email spam not only slows down the performance of the server, but also occupies a lot of storage space. Emails are the easiest and the best way for these viruses to spread.

Working of Spam Filters

Anti spam software and anti spam solutions are essential to aid you in getting a clean inbox. The server spam filter or anti spam server is a software application that scans all the incoming email messages. With the help of their configuration, they identify Spam and prevent them from reaching your inbox. The spam mails not only eats away the storage space and make selecting your personal emails difficult, they also can contain viruses. Using anti spam filters is necessary as it saves both your time and money. But even when you are using anti spam filters, it is recommended to check the messages just to make sure that no personal message has been marked as spam. Even the server spam filters marks email as "false positive" to those that are identified as spam, but in reality they are valid messages. There are various anti spam programs that identifies Spam and sends it to the junk mail folder.

Not all spam filters work in the same way. Some of them are pre programmed where the know spammers are inserted. They accordingly block them. Some of the programs filter the emails based on the keywords used in the mails. Some of the email spam filters are configured and you can easily customize it or the network administrator can also customize it according to the requirement of the company.

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