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The Hidden Dangers of HTML Email

By Kathy Burns-Millyard

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As a veteran Internet user, I can honestly say I remember a time when HTML email was not possible. Back then RTF wasn't available either and for that matter, email programs did not even wrap lines for you or allow file attachments.

Today however, I receive a steady and annoying stream of email in all shapes, colors and sizes. Almost all promotional advertisements and many newsletters come in Html format.

Now, Spam is annoying, Spam in droves even more so, but Spam with "twirlygigs" is intolerable --- and dangerous. HTML is for websites. I visit them all the time and enjoy their various amusements. Email however, is a tool. A communications method used for getting work done. I get plenty of regular email, hundreds of pieces a day usually, due to the support, consulting and writing services I provide. If all of those emails are in HTML format then I'm stuck looking at potentially hundreds of web pages and thousands of graphics.

HTML email takes extra time to download, and for me it takes extra time to read. You see I don't trust HTML email. I've coded many websites in my day and I know that scripts can be hidden in the pages. Now when you couple that fact with the daily news about viruses and worms being sent, well that's just downright scary, so I do not allow my email program to automatically open HTML formatted email. Now I rarely use Outlook and Express (sorry Microsoft but they feel just a bit too dangerous to me now days) however I'd rather be safe than sorry no matter which email program I use. So, I have my email software configured to show all HTML messages as attachments.

Having the email converted to an attachment allows me to immediately see if there are any other files included with the message. And let me tell you, this has saved my butt time after time! I've lost count of how many times I've gotten email with the HTML attached, and malicious code, worms and viruses attached right next to it. If my email program was configured to "conveniently" display HTML as a web page, then a lot of those attached files would have opened on their own and done who knows what to my system.

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So, if you receive a lot of email yourself, be careful what you allow to come in. If you run a newsletter or Email update service of any kind, please be courteous and at least ASK before sending HTML formatted email. And when you do have permission to send HTML email, don't include heavy graphics, scripts or other file attachments.

Text may not be as glamorous, but it's a heck of a lot safer and much easier for your readers to glance through.

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Receiving Spam Email" at <http://www.sasezpublications.com/Reports/Stop-Spam/> This article is provided courtesy of <http://www.SasEzPublications.com> – You may freely reprint this article on your website or in your newsletter provided this courtesy notice and the author name and URL remain intact.

THE PROBLEM WITH HTML EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

By windsong

THE PROBLEM WITH HTML EMAIL NEWSLETTERS by windsong

The recent trend towards HTML email really disturbs me. I, for one, do not like HTML email. If I want to see the glitz and color, I will go to your website, but send me plain text in your email. Do I receive HTML emails? Sure. But the delete key is right there and I use it. And so do a lot of other people. HTML belongs in web pages.

One major concern is bandwidth. HTML email files are much larger than plain text. I resent the fact that it takes longer to download the HTML email from my server. It also takes longer to load it into the email window. Then I have to scroll back and forth. Forget it. Deleting is easier.

Regular email done in HTML is rather pointless. My biggest concern are newsletters done in HTML. These are large emails anyway, and doing them in HTML is only compounding the problem. One must consider the recipient. Are we so egotistical to believe that ALL the people on the 'net are in the USA?? What about the millions of people in other countries who pay by the minute to download these extra large files of HTML emails? Some of these people prefer to download their email, and then go offline while they read them. This makes the images in HTML email rather useless.

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For the images to work, you must stay online.

Then there is the problem of some email programs that do not support HTML. Just because yours does, doesn't mean that mine does. DO NOT assume that everyone can read HTML e-mail just because you can. Consider, too, that not all email readers will display your HTML in the same way. It may not look the way you think it does.

Some newsletter publishers give their subscribers the option of receiving plain text or HTML. This is all well and good, however, it seems to me that it would be twice the work for the already overworked editor to format the same newsletter twice. Maintaining two lists of subscribers would also become a burden.

Whats the point in making your newsletter look just like your website? Why bother with the newsletter? Just send 'em

to your website and be done with it.

What makes a newsletter good? Simplicity, readability, full of content that the reader wants, and a lack of flashing glitz. Keep it simple, and keep your subscribers.

windsong is the editor/publisher of six newsletters. One of them is All About E-Zines:
<http://marketing-resources.com/EZzine.html>



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