

It's Time to Get Smarter About Spam



Today's Agenda

- Why are we here?
- How does spam software work?
- An important reminder
- Best practices
- The most important thing you'll ever learn about spam

Why are we here?

According to the Radicati group, which studies such things, the world sends 247 billion emails per day.

That's 2.8 million emails per
second

That's 41 emails for every
person on the planet...

and only 26% of the world has
Internet access...

If each email were a foot...

- The worldwide volume of email would take us to and from the Moon more than a million times per day.

And if that weren't scary
enough

- What percentage of emails are unwanted by recipients?

97 percent. Seriously.

- A recent study by Microsoft found that 97 percent of email is unwanted by recipients.

There's just no way around it

- Spam software rivals the alphabet, telephone, and television as the the greatest invention in the history of human communication.*
 - *(Don't trust "New Media". Twitter makes email experts cry.)

But how does spam software
work?

First, it learns from you

- Every time you mark something spam, you're teaching your mail server what words, phrases, and formats appear in spammy email.

Second, it learns from everyone else.

- Spam blockers contain hundreds of rules about spam. These rules are the byproduct of 10+ years of identifying spammy messages.

Finally, it assigns every email a score

- Every “spammy” element adds some number of points.
- Every non-spammy element scores zero or negative points.

Spam blockers are like golf

What scores points?

Some are funny...

- Oprah!
- Larger body parts!
- CAPITAL letters!
- !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Hey bro!

Some are unexpected...

- Dear (anything)
- “You can be removed from this list.”
- Mentions age > 20
- Subject starts with “Do you”

Some are downright unfair...

- Do you support gay rights?
 - We're sorry, but you simply can't use the words "lesbian" or "lesbians."
- Do you support policy reform?
 - Better not be "bank laws."
- Do you like to raise money?
 - For your sake and ours, stop talking about "millions of dollars."

Follow the Spam Assassin

body	Generic Test for Unsolicited Bulk Email	GTUBE	1000.000
body	Incorporates a tracking ID number	TRACKER_ID	2.026 1.102 1.750 1.306
body	Weird repeated double-quotation marks	WEIRD_QUOTING	0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001
body	Body contains a ROT13-encoded email address	EMAIL_ROT13	1
body	HTML and text parts are different	MPART_ALT_DIFF	2.246 0.724 0.595 0.790
body	HTML and text parts are different	MPART_ALT_DIFF_COUNT	2.799 1.483 1.199 1.112
body	Message body has 80-90% blank lines	BLANK_LINES_80_90	1
body	eval:check_ma_non_text()	MULTIPART_ALT_NON_TEXT	1
body	Character set indicates a foreign language	CHARSET_FARAWAY	3.200
rawbody	Extra blank lines in base64 encoding	MIME_BASE64_BLANKS	0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001
rawbody	Message text disguised using base64 encoding	MIME_BASE64_TEXT	0.001 0.001 0.001 1.741
body	Missing blank line between MIME header and body	MISSING_MIME_HB_SEP	0.001 0.001 0.001 0.001
body	Multipart message mostly text/html MIME	MIME_HTML_MAINLY	0.354 0.001 0.725 0.428
body	Message only has text/html MIME parts	MIME_HTML_ONLY	2.199 1.105 1.199 0.723
rawbody	Quoted-printable line longer than 76 chars	MIME_QP_LONG_LINE	0.001
body	MIME character set is an unknown ISO charset	MIME_BAD_ISO_CHARSET	1
body	IP to HTTPS link found in HTML	HTTPS_IP_MISMATCH	1
body	Message contained a URI which was truncated	URI_TRUNCATED	0.001
header	Passed through trusted hosts only via SMTP	ALL_TRUSTED	-1.000
header	Informational: message was not relayed via SMTP	NO_RELAYS	-0.001
header	NJABL: sender is confirmed open relay	RCVD_IN_NJABL_RELAY	0 1.881 0 2.499
header	NJABL: sender is confirmed spam source	RCVD_IN_NJABL_SPAM	0 1.466 0 1.249
header	NJABL: sent through multi-stage open relay	RCVD_IN_NJABL_MULTI	1
header	NJABL: sender is an open formmail	RCVD_IN_NJABL_CGI	1
header	NJABL: sender is an open proxy	RCVD_IN_NJABL_PROXY	0 0.208 0 2.224
header	SORBS: sender is open HTTP proxy server	RCVD_IN_SORBS_HTTP	0 2.499 0 0.001
header	SORBS: sender is open SOCKS proxy server	RCVD_IN_SORBS SOCKS	0 2.443 0 1.927
header	SORBS: sender is open proxy server	RCVD_IN_SORBS_MISC	1
header	SORBS: sender is open SMTP relay	RCVD_IN_SORBS SMTP	1
header	SORBS: sender is an abusable web server	RCVD_IN_SORBS WEB	0 0.614 0 0.770
header	SORBS: sender demands to never be tested	RCVD_IN_SORBS_BLOCK	1

Learn More at http://spamassassin.apache.org/tests_3_3_x.html

Check Your Email's Spamminess in Salsa

email: fb5524

Create Blast Content Send Options Targeting **Validation** Summary

Please use the "More Info" links below each item to validate components of your e-mail blast before you send it. Red exclamation marks indicate a possible issue, while green check marks indicate no issues.

- from / reply-to**
✓
[More Info](#)
- links**
! [More Info](#)
- microsoft check**
✓
[More Info](#)
- unsubscribe link**
! [More Info](#)
- send a test email**
Test Email Address:
- number of targets**
! [More Info](#)
- size**
✓
[More Info](#)
- image path check**
! [More Info](#)
- spam checker**
[More Info](#)

On the validation tab of the email blaster, you'll find the "spam checker."

**BEFORE WE CONTINUE,
A QUICK REMINDER...**



Write Well

- Be honest, clear, and direct.
- Sound conversational.
- Avoid gimmicks.
- Be cognizant of word choice. Say what you mean. Clichés in all writing should be avoided. Make them as rare as needles in haystacks.

Format intelligently

- Don't be cute with formatting, even if you can't imagine anyone else in history using a format like yours.
- Don't use weird spaces, all caps, odd characters, and the like.
- Never ever copy/paste from MS Word.

Pick topics with thought

- Avoid email blasts that cover multiple *spammy* topics at once.
 - Opposition to Congressional regulation of adult films whose actors are hooked on weight-loss pills, heroin and credit debt does not good email make.
- Make sure you're blasting on topics your supporters want to read.

Avoid common pitfalls

- Always use an unsubscribe link. Always double check it.
- Make sure your subject line makes sense and doesn't contain *spammy* words or phrases
- Make sure your "From" address exists.

Add an SPF record to your DNS

- If you control your DNS, or know who does, have them add a TXT record that looks like this:

```
v=spf1 a mx include:salsalabs.com ~all
```

If you blast all the time...

- Pay extremely close attention to why people are leaving your emails.
 - Are they unsubscribing?
 - Are they declaring you spam?
 - Do their emails not exist?
- Check your replies, people who unsubscribe will often tell you precisely why.

Most Importantly...

DO NOT BUY
LISTS!*

Opt-in Only

*Note: this would be a spammy subject line

Buying lists...

- Nukes your deliverability
- Violates your contract with Salsa
- Irritates both your supporters and your potential supporters
- Costs you tens of thousands of dollars

It doesn't actually work.

- A “conversion rate” measure the number of people who *acted on a request for action* versus the number who *were asked to act*.
- Purchased lists underperform opt-in lists, physical and phone canvassing by ten or more percentage points.

What would you do with \$50,000?

- Buy a street team.
- Buy six of them.
- Knock some doors.
- Make some phone calls.
- Even Twitter and Facebook can generate higher conversion rates, and they're the Internet equivalent of Ritalin.