

## From The TechnoManor

Well, it's Tuesday morning and my Inbox is empty. Just a reminder, Send your computer, email, Web, or related questions to:

[frenchygrey@gmail.com](mailto:frenchygrey@gmail.com)

I'll attempt to answer one each week in *The Link*.

So, tell me::

*If you throw spam against a firewall, will it stick?*

The quick answer is: *No*. But let's talk about this.

Spam is a canned meat product from Hormel Foods. Oops, wrong spam. The one we want to talk about are those unwanted pieces of email you get from people you've never heard of.

Why do you get that unwanted email?

- Your email address got on mailing list without your permission.
- Your email address is reasonably common and a computer guessed it by looking in an electronic dictionary and trying different combinations of words or numbers.

So, how could your email address get on a mailing list? The most common ways are:

- You gave it to someone or some company legitimately, but they sold it or gave it away. (Always be sure you read the fine print when giving someone your email address!)
- It appeared on a Web site. Maybe you are a contact person for an organization or event. A scavenger computer on the Internet extracted your address and added it to a database for nefarious purposes.
- It was on a friend's computer, or server computer of someone you do business with. Their computer was compromised (often through some malicious software). The compromise sent your email address to computers on the Internet that accumulate pilfered information for unscrupulous purposes.

What can you do about spam? There are a few things, but all have drawbacks. You could:

- Try anti-spam programs. They have to be trained to watch for keywords or sender email addresses. The senders' addresses often change and tricks can be used to mask the offensive keywords. Some spam seeps through.
- Use your Internet Service Provider (ISP) or email provider's anti-spam blocking tools. These do work, but are sometimes "overzealous" and block legitimate email.

- A technique I use assumes all email is spam. My email program looks for the sender's email address in my contacts list. If they're found, the email is put in my Inbox. The drawback is I have to examine my "spambox" periodically for email from new (desirable) senders.
- Get a new email address! If too much spam is still getting through, the best thing to do is to start over by getting a new email address. This is not a desirable thing, but sometimes it's the best option.

Won't my firewall block spam?

A firewall is typically a special program (in a corporation it is often a special computer) that filters all the information between other programs on your computer and the Internet. This filter can prevent information from being sent to the Internet, or allow it to pass through. The filtering also applies to information arriving from the Internet.

In general, the firewall passes email and Web surfing, but blocks (or forbids) everything else going to or coming from the Internet.

Since spam is simply unwanted email, if you try to block spam in your firewall, the only way to do this is to block all email. So, you're sort of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

So the answer to the question: *If you throw spam against a firewall, will it stick?* The answer is a conditional, "No, unless you want to stop receiving all email."

Questions?

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