



SUNBELT SOFTWARE

SPAM GLOSSARY

Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

An AUP is a policy statement, made by an ISP, or any company that has customers, in which the company sets out its "rules" for use of the account. A good AUP will clearly state that not only is spamming not allowed, but will spell out the punishment for doing so.

Blackhole

(n) Either an e-mail account which silently and invisibly deletes all mail sent to it, or the act of doing so.

(v) To automatically delete emails coming from a certain IP address.

CAUCE

The Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial E-Mail. A volunteer organization that is trying to amend the United States junk fax law to apply to spam.

Chicken Boner

A derisive reference to spammers, implying they are lowlifes who spend all their time in front of a computer with fried chicken bones littering the floor. More specifically, refers to a small-time or inexperienced spammer.

Click-Through

A web page that exists merely to redirect users to another site. Click-throughs are used so that a web site being spamvertised need not be mentioned in the actual advertisement. Spammers will typically create click-through pages on throwaway accounts and spamvertise the click-through page.

Dialup/Dialin Connection

Often referred to as simply a "dialup", a dialup connection is the main way that a spammer connects to the Internet, usually by using some unwitting ISP. It is called a dialup because the connection is made over the phone lines, and the spammer must dialup the ISP to make a connection.

DNS

Domain Name System; how the Internet keeps track of which host name corresponds to which IP number (which is what the computers use internally).

DOS

Denial of Service. A type of attack against another system that cripples it. Examples include mail-bombing, ping flooding, and SYN flooding.

Dropbox

When a spammer creates an e-mail account on one system, then spams from another account, soliciting replies to the first e-mail account, or "dropbox". Free e-mail providers such as Yahoo and Hotmail are commonly used as dropboxes.

Harvesting, E-mail Harvesting

The act of using a program (commonly known as a "spider" or "robot") to search either the web or Usenet and gather e-mail addresses. When spammers do this, they usually aren't able to filter out some of the munged addresses that are used which results in lots of bounces when the spam is sent out.

Headers

Headers are the part of an email that most people do not see. Headers contain not only the "Subject:" line, but a complete list of the path that the email took along various machines on the Internet to reach its destination. Learning to decipher headers is a major part of becoming a spam hunter, because the spammer will usually try to forge, conceal, and mislead with the headers.

Honeypot

In general, a system designed to look attractive to crackers and other undesirables. The crackers or whomever attack the honeypot while being carefully watched by the honeypot's admins. In spam terms: It's a mail server set up to appear to be an open relay, but it really isn't. Ideally, a honeypot will relay the spammer relay tests, but it won't relay any actual spam that the spammers send, the actual spam just gets thrown away.

Internet Service Provider (ISP)

An ISP is a company that provides a connection to the Internet, usually by a dialup connection. ISPs range from the huge (AOL, Compuserve) to thousands of smaller, local ones. Good ISPs have an AUP to discourage abuse of their network and the Internet by spammers. Spammer hunting often results in a spammer losing their account with their ISP, forcing them to get another, or to see the light and stop spamming.

Injection Point

A host that is being used to relay spam through.

IMHO

Short for In My Humble Opinion

LART

Short for Luser Attitude Adjustment Tool, as in "The spammer was sharply LARTed right away and lost his account."

Mail Bomb

The result of sending a spammer (or anyone for that matter) lots of email until his or her site or account crashes.

Mainsleaze

A mainstream (i.e. well-known) company that takes the lamentable step of spamming. They tend to come around more often than not, especially when they discover that nobody trusts them with their email addresses any more. (Or that a lot of their other mail suddenly starts bouncing too).

Munging

Changing one's e-mail address so that it is invalid, but a human can determine the proper address. For example: dmuth@ot.com_NOSPAM. This technique is used to foil spammers who harvest addresses.

Nuke

Nuke refers to an ISP cancelling a user's account. A nuke is a victory - score one for the good guys.

News.admin.net-abuse.email (NANAE, or NANA)

The news.admin.net-abuse.* newsgroup hierarchy is used to report net-abuse, of which spam is undoubtedly the largest one. Spam hunters often post to the newsgroup news.admin.net-abuse.email.

Open Relay

A mail server that permits relaying by anyone. Such systems are often abused by spammers and must be configured to prevent open relaying.

Opt-in / Opt-out Mailing Lists

An opt-in mailing list is the one most people encounter on the list. You sign up, and then start receiving mail from the list because you asked for it. Opt-out, on the other hand, sends the mail to you first, and then gives you the option of not being on the list, usually by a so-called "remove" request. Some spam claims to be opt-in, but it never is. Opt-out is like getting subscribed to a new CD club every day, unannounced, then having to take the time to unsubscribe to every one so that you do not get billed for CDs you did not order.

POP

Post Office Protocol. A common protocol that is used for retrieving e-mail from a mail server.

Realtime Blackhole List (RBL)

The Mail Abuse Protection System (MAPS) Realtime Blackhole List (see <http://maps.vix.com/rbl>) is a "system for creating intentional network outages for the purpose of limiting the transport of known-to-be-unwanted mass e-mail." Basically, it's blackmail meant to persuade ISPs to change their systems to make them less easy to abuse by spammers, mis-using the Internet and causing a lot of collateral damage.

Robot, Spider, Webcrawler

A robot, also known as a spider, crawler, or webcrawler, is a program that traverses the World Wide Web, and gathers information. Robots were originally used to gather information for search engines. Indeed, most robots are still of this variety, however, a new brand of "evil robots" has arrived on the scene - known as spambots. Spambots have taken the traditional, harmless ideas of robots and warped into something else.

Signal to Noise Ratio

Signal to noise ratio refers to how much relevant content (signal) something has as opposed to non-relevant content (noise). The term is from radio, but can also be applied to newsgroups. The "signal" in a newsgroup is regular postings, which are on-topic. The "noise" in a newsgroup is everything else that does not help contribute to the purpose for which the newsgroup was created

(i.e. a mutually beneficial discussion about a certain specific topic). Note that spam postings are not the only noise: off topic-postings, flames, "posting tests" and other things can also be defined as noise. Generally, however, nothing has lowered the signal to noise ratio in all of Usenet like spamming has. :(

Spam, Bulk Email

Spam originally meant to post many off-topic and inappropriate postings (mostly commercials) to a newsgroup(s), making it hard to read by lowering the signal to noise ratio. The term spam, of course, is the product manufactured by Hormel, Inc. It came to it's current meaning because of a skit by Monty Python's Flying Circus in which a group of Vikings begins singing "Spam, spam, spam, spam..." and drowning out anyone else who was trying to talk in the area. Spam has also come to mean unsolicited commercial email (UCE), which is also known as bulk email. Spam has a much nicer ring to it, as well as being able to create nice words such as "spammer" and "spambot." P.S. Spam is short for "spiced ham." :)

Spambot

A spambot is a robot that specializes in gathering email addresses for a spammer to use. It basically follows links and saves any email addresses it finds as it goes along. A spambot usually gathers emails from the web or from Usenet, but may also gather it from other sources.

Spamfighter, White-hat

The good guys, i.e. those who are actively doing something about the spam problem, by spam hunting, legislative efforts, spreading good information, etc.

Spamhaus

Spamhaus is yet another play upon the word "spam": it is used to refer to a site (company) that is not just spam friendly, but actively produces spam. Usually the label is only applied to sites that not only know they are producing spam, but are not doing anything about it. The plural of spamhaus is spamhäuser.

Spammer Hunting, Spam Hunter

A favorite sport among many people is spammer hunting. It begins when you receive a piece of spam in the mail. Instead of deleting it, spam hunters track down who sent it, and take action, usually resulting in a loss of account for the spammer. Some have even won lawsuits against spammers.

Spammer

One who spams. Usually some desperate yet misguided individual who has bought some spamware (probably from a spammer) and is under the completely wrong impression that money can be made from spamming.

Spamnest

Yet another derivation of the word spam, indicating a place (e.g. company) that produces spam. Think of a really annoying nest of bees.

Spamware

Spamware is any kind of spammer software. Spambots are a type of spamware, as is the software the spammer uses to send the mail. Often these are integrated into one package.

Spyware

Software containing a trojan horse which monitors your system or your net browsing activity and sends the results to the author of the spyware. Once used only by crackers, spyware is now used by mainstream companies to collect marketing information.

UBE

Unsolicited Bulk Email, aka spam.

UCE

Unsolicited Commercial Email, aka spam.

Usenet

Also known as "news", "newsgroups", or "discussion group." Usenet is a huge collection of newsgroups about every and any topic you can imagine. Once a person posts to a newsgroup, it is transmitted to news servers all over the world for other people to see. Spammers often extract email addresses from newsgroups, so many people have stopped using usenet or hide their email when posting.