

For years spam has been a constant source of problems for users of e-mail systems. In Australia the problem we share with the rest of the world, isn't going away or getting any less in terms of the volume of spam. Here are a few tips on handling the never decreasing (ever increasing) amounts of spam that "lands in your in-box" and bogs you down and gets in the way of running your business.

## If you are the victim of email abuse (spamming)

*"Help, I've just been hit with a whole pile of emails from sites that are sending me offensive and unwanted emails. What can I do?"*

You need to consider investing in a good spam filter or apply the free spam filters that your local Internet Service Provider (ISP) offers or recommends. This is a good start to narrowing down the volume of spam. You won't ever stop it but there are some strategies you can use and adopt to suit your business needs.

## Where do you find out if you have been black banned (for spamming)?

The 1st port of call is with your local ISP to see how, where, when and why you have been blocked.

They may offer a service to assist you in this area. For the blocking to occur the ISP needs to know your real IP address so we suggest starting with the email account details affected and log a support call with the support desk of the email/Internet Service Provider that you use e.g.; Adam, TPG, BigPond, Internode, Chariot etc.

They should be able to help you on the path to clearing your name or failing that at the very worst (as its often faster) open up a new email account.

Often, the most effective manner is to drop the old email address and start afresh, but this time use an email address that looks somewhat like [My2Busi0nesSeMail0IsOpeN8aGaiN@xyz.com.au](mailto:My2Busi0nesSeMail0IsOpeN8aGaiN@xyz.com.au) This sort of email address structure is VERY hard to crack as it mixes upper and lower case, and numeric's all in one string. It's ugly, and hard to remember, but it works! It uses a pass phrase (sentence) with a year as its combination mixed up in upper lower case e.g.; My Business email Is Open Again 2008

## Are there any laws against Spam in Australia?

In Australia there are laws covering unwanted emails as set out at;

- Australian Spam Act 2003 [http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC\\_2861](http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_2861)
- The text of the Australian anti-spam legislation, the Spam Act 2003, is available at: [www.scaleplus.law.gov.au/html/pasteact/3/3628/top.htm](http://www.scaleplus.law.gov.au/html/pasteact/3/3628/top.htm)
- DCITA Information Economy: spam brochures are available at: [www.dcita.gov.au/spam](http://www.dcita.gov.au/spam)
  - Internet Industry Association Privacy Code of Practice [http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC\\_310325](http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_310325)

- Coalition Against Unsolicited Bulk Email <http://www.caube.org.au/>
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Similar laws apply overseas in several countries.

## What can you do to fight spam?

You need to understand that you are NEVER going to stop spam, but there are some things you can do to minimise the levels, starting with a good spam filter.

There are many some sites that offer helpful (some free and some you have to pay for) tips on fighting spam emails. Here are a few <http://spam.abuse.net/userhelp/> and <http://gr.spam.abuse.net/> and also in US <http://www.ftc.gov/spam/> (where a lot of the spam used to come from but now it's shifted to Europe and Asia/SE Asia Sites)

Our primary advice is that "victims" should consider sending your abuse reports through your own ISP as they may

- help you avoid mistakes - you need to be careful about how you go about classifying and reporting spam
- generate blocking lists based on reports received
- produce streamlined reports, easy for authorities, police etc to act on
- allow you to track your complaint status

A final tip - Never try to fight abuse with abuse, e.g. by "mail bombing" the service or an ISP, as you may find *your* own email account nuked.

## Other e-mail questions often asked:

### How do you highlight emails with colours to indicate groupings?

In Windows Mail (Vista) - there is no method to do this other than setting a Flag for a message (red flag) or Watch Conversation.

- In Outlook - Outlook has a defined list of categories, but you can customise this list suit your needs as Business, Personal, Travel, Customer, Supplier etc - and also you can set a range of coloured Flags (red/blue/yellow/green/orange/purple) - this enables you to group messages by category or flag colour. (You need to remember the significance of the colour coding etc.) You can also set a Reminder as an action date & time.
- In Outlook Express - there is no method to do this other than setting a Flag for a message (red flag) or Watch Conversation.

The better method is to use a 3rd party add-on tool such NEO Organiser for Outlook [http://www.pcprofile.com/How\\_NEO\\_Works.htm](http://www.pcprofile.com/How_NEO_Works.htm) and [http://www.pcprofile.com/email\\_organizer.htm](http://www.pcprofile.com/email_organizer.htm) as that offers colour coding of emails for groups plus a whole pile of other very handy features for searching by date by topic etc that extends the functionality of Outlook way beyond what Microsoft ever offered.

## How do I set up a standard email template?

The easiest way (in most email systems the approach is the same) is to compose an email in the shape and format required as the "standard template" you wish to use.

- Create the formatted document in your email system then use File "Save As Stationery" to save the standard template.
- Create a new email as **New item**,
- Then under **Format** you can select a drop down box that says **Apply Stationery**
- Pick the "template you wish to apply and alter the fields (in your document template) as you require e.g.; name address/text and so forth.
- When the email is formatted correctly (and spellchecked) select recipients and send.
- If sending to a group use BCC. This is vital so you don't disclose the whole list of email addresses to each other!

## How do I send group mail?

Here we refer only to Outlook (but the process is similar for other mail services)

Outlook allows you to create **GROUP email Distribution Lists** for conveniently sending email to a group of people. BUT make sure you have the consent of the group to be emailed i.e.; they need to be able to opt-in and to unsubscribe!

- To create a group list, open **Tools > Address Book**. click on **File > New Group**.
- Enter a name for the group and click on **Select Members** (select names in your contacts/address book) to add contacts to the group.
- To send an e-mail to a group, create the message you want to send and in the **To** field, enter your own name to ensure that you see what the email looks like as it's sent out.
- Click on **BCC**, (Blind Carbon Copy) and choose your group's name.
- **REPEAT AGAIN to hide the names and e-mail address of the people whom you are sending the e-mail, click on the BCC button** instead of CC.
- **NEVER, EVER** use CC as you will expose the entire group email contact names to the whole list and this has privacy and spam implications that may come back and bite you!
- Then you can send the same message to every contact in that group BUT make sure that all recipients are hidden via the BCC field before hitting the send key.
- Send emails in plain text and allow for users to unsubscribe i.e.; to opt-out
- Please excuse the shouting (the capitalisation) but it's a really vital tip!

## More Tips for the marketing minded about emails!

If you must send graphically impacting html to the group then we suggest you use an attached PDF file as it will at least be shown effectively in that format when received as some email systems will strip away all images and html and convert to plain text and your marketing efforts have been totally wasted!

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This presentation will tell you how to make better use of Outlook Express. The guidelines here can be applied to other email systems. [www.pcprofile.com/OutlookExpress\\_Tips\\_and\\_Tricks.pdf](http://www.pcprofile.com/OutlookExpress_Tips_and_Tricks.pdf)

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**About the Author - PCProfile is an Adelaide based company with over 30 years practical computing experience in small, medium and large enterprises and offers managers and business owners in SMEs, and SOHO businesses practical tips and advice on how to get the best out of the technology used by your SME/SOHO business.**

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