

STOPPING THE SPAM – ONE SOLUTION

There's no doubt what the biggest headache for many Internet users is – unsolicited email otherwise known as spam.

At best you probably get a few each day, at worst, you could be inundated with hundreds, or even thousands.

Spam is bad enough, but when the email contains viruses or spyware, then you run the very real risk of infecting your computer and rendering it useless.

There are of course very good ways that you can reduce the risk of virus infection. Anti virus software is extremely effective (as long as it's kept up to date) and is not very expensive. In fact, it doesn't have to cost anything at all. The same goes for anti-spyware software.

If you are using a broadband connection, then a firewall is essential. A firewall is software that keeps the contents of your computer secure. Without it, anyone could look at the files on your computer or even watch what keys you press when typing in passwords or other confidential information. Again, a firewall is not necessarily expensive; some are free, but it is vital that it is kept up to date. Even if you're not on broadband, a firewall should be a serious consideration.

So, once you are set up with anti virus, anti spyware and firewall software, what can you do to reduce the amount of spam you receive?

At Associate Internet Promotions, we offer the option of using a Challenge Response spam trap, called Box Trapper. There are others, but the principle that they use is that every incoming email is spam unless proved otherwise. It's proved otherwise by generating a verification request asking the sender to reply to that verification request to prove that they are genuine.

Once they do that, their email address is added to a white list and they won't have to verify themselves again. If they don't, the email will eventually be deleted from the queue after a pre-defined amount of time.

Box Trapper does offer the option of looking at all email held in the queue and manually accepting an email for delivery or manually adding an email address to the white list.

There are advantages and disadvantages of this system. Some people don't like having to verify themselves and so just ignore the verification request. Others might not realise what it is and do nothing. It's also probably not a good idea using the system on an address to which form results are sent, but for me, it has reduced the amount of spam I get from many hundreds per day to just a few, and it's made life a lot easier. Among the spam it traps are of course any that may have viruses attached, so any likelihood of my computer being infected has got much less.

There is other software around that allows you to screen your email before downloading it to your computer, but if you get lots of email, it would seem to

me to be a much bigger job to go through everything to select the emails you want to be delivered. Mailwasher Pro is probably the best known of the software that does this.

There are things that you can do to prevent spammers getting hold of your email address in the first place, but that's the subject of a future article. If you already suffer from a problem with it, then a challenge response system such as Box Trapper, although not a solution that is appropriate for everyone, can make life a lot easier.

Associate Internet Promotions offers email only accounts, web site hosting and low cost web site design and updating. Box Trapper is an optional part of all three products.

For more information, call free on 0800 138 3602 or go to www.aip.co.uk.