Spam, spam, spam, spam...

"How do we reduce our spam?" I get asked...

Far from having an over-stocked cupboard of canned meat, the problem being faced is an ever increasing one of spam, the 'jargon' name for junk email.

Email is a technically very insecure method of communication. There is no proof of identity or intent when someone sends you an email and it is very easy to claim to be someone you are not. It is also very easy to set up an email server for the sole intention of sending out UBE (unsolicited bulk email), or to exploit a poorly secured legitimate email server, as is more commonly the case. It is also common for virus-infected PCs to be the source of spam.

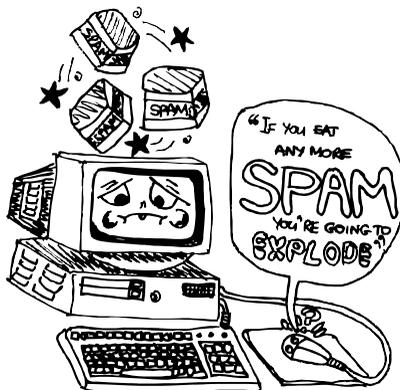> **80% of spam is sent by the same 200 hard-core spammers.**

So what can be done? Sadly there is no magic tick-box that will stop you receiving spam. Instead, you have to get clever. Anti-spam software is a good method, as it will move most of the spam to a 'Spam' folder in your inbox, allowing you to concentrate on the relevant emails in your inbox. Then, you can quickly scan through all the emails which have been caught (to double check they ARE spam) once a day, and delete them with increasing confidence as time goes on.

You could also use more than one email address – one for personal emails from friends and family, and one you give to the bank, the catalogue company, and the market-research people, who promise you could win a trip to the Caribbean if you only give them your details. You can get free email addresses from companies such as Hotmail, Google, and Yahoo.

One thing you definitely should NOT do is respond to the spam email. More often than not, doing so will bring you more spam, as you confirm that the email account is active. The only exception to this is bona fide companies – the high street names, who usually DO respect your privacy when you unsubscribe from their mailing lists.

Using obvious email addresses like 'sales@yourcompany.com' is bound to attract spam, as well as genuine new leads - so these need to be checked extra carefully for legitimacy before being discarded.

Spam Do's and Don'ts:
✓ DO consider using multiple email addresses
✓ DO consider anti-spam software – but try before you buy
✓ DO check your spam folder carefully before emptying it!
✗ DON'T give your email address out to just anyone, and particularly on the internet
✗ DON'T respond to spam emails

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