

Taking action against problem of e-mail 'spam'

Lots of people begin their workday by turning on their computer and picking up their e-mail. If they're anything like me, they then spend a fair amount of time pawing through and deleting all the spam that infests their actual e-mail messages.

I took a census of my own e-mail over the last week, and fully half my messages were spam. The range and sometimes grossness — is amazing: Mail order pot; get rich quick; fix your credit; low cost mortgage; and insurance; find out anything about anyone; make money by working at home. By size alone, the pornographic messages merit their own mention, with spam ranging from low cost Viagra on line to suggestive pictures of (always female) celebrities to outright bestiality.

Spam is turning out to be a big — and growing nuisance. According to Jupiter Media Metrix, an Internet research firm, the 700 messages per year the average computer user now has to delete will increase to 1,400 by 2006, when the worldwide volume of spam will rise to more than 200 billion messages.

It's expensive, too. An employee who gets only five spam messages a day and spends 30 seconds dealing with each one will, over a year's time, waste 15 hours on junk mail. Another estimate is that dealing with spam messages costs employers \$1 each.

And spam — especially the raunchier stuff — can be very nasty, especially for kids who can open up what looks like an innocent message from a friend and find it's hard core pornography. That's why Rep. Marc Shulman (R-West Bloomfield), outraged that his young kids were exposed to pornographic spam, the family computer, has introduced legislation that would outlaw commercial e-mail that is deceptive or misleading.

His bill, HB 6777, defines deceptive e-mails as those containing "false or misleading information on the subject line," use an Internet domain name without the owner's permission or that obscure or misrepresent the point of origin of the message. Shulman patterned his bill on a Washington state law that bans unsolicited deceptive commercial e-mail.

Smart, thoughtful and one of the few legislators actually comfortable in the world of high tech, Shulman is the same guy who pushed a "cybercourt" system through the legislature last year. Cybercourts will allow testimony to be taken and legal briefs to be filed electronically and help settle business disputes faster and cheaper than regular courtroom procedures.

Shulman says spam has reached such proportions that outraged constituents are calling up and demanding something be done. His bill has attracted 16 cosponsors so far, from both parties. It should get its first hearing from the House Commerce Committee next month.

I asked this newspaper's technology whiz, Dave Morin, about the bill. "It can't hurt," responded Morin, "but it's not likely to solve the whole problem." In part, says Morin, spam is a national problem and passing a law in one state like Michigan isn't going to be a total solution. Worse, according to Morin, much of the spam now being generated is coming from overseas, where the practice is unregulated.

"A guy in China can spend \$160 for a CD ROM, which gives complete instructions on how to get into the spam business, far beyond the reach of US law or regulation," says Morin. "He buys e-mail addresses and sends spam messages by the millions, and even though he gets a minuscule response in percentage terms, it's enough to make a profitable business."

What can one person do? First thing, says Morin, is "don't reply to the spam message, even though the reply line says you'll be taken off the list. All replying does is validate that your e-mail address is a real one, thereby increasing its value when resold."

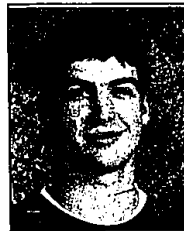
I found ZDNet/Tech Update a worthwhile site for up-to-date information, especially a helpful article by Leo Schlesinger on "IT antidotes to spam." And, if all else fails, you can always try suing. A guy in Washington state recently won \$2,000 by suing under the state's anti-spam law.

In the meantime, I'd suggest you get in touch with Rep. Shulman and offer support for his bill. He can be reached at (888) 496-4958.

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Chris Austin

coaching from the likes of John Harrison, and the willingness of the coaches and players to with that makes this team so great; not their ability to recruit.

Recently, Harrison has been accused of recruiting for their winning program. Denise Albrecht asks how, "...One high school in our community could come up with so many talented players year after year?" She blames the problem on recruiting. What she overlooks, though, are several different factors that result in a winning team.

Players come to Harrison not as recruits, but as players looking to win. It is a fact that you are more likely to be recognized by colleges when you play for a winning team rather than a losing one. And if you are a talented player, you don't want to waste your talent on a team that will not win. With a reputation such as Harrison's, you get players coming from all over to win and receive recognition.

Because there is school of choice, student who would normally go to North Farmington High School or Farmington High School can come to Harrison and excel. The same thing, though, applies to other sports and even academics. Farmington High School's tennis team may be better than Harrison's, so students who would normally go to HHS instead go to Farmington to play for a better program. North Farmington may have better academics. So a student who wants a better education may go there when they should really be at FHS.

It's a two-way street, but nobody seems to be complaining about the other side of the road.

Another factor overlooked is the heart and determination of the players and the coaching staff. Football is not just a fall sport at Harrison, it is a year round event. From summer weight training and doubles practices to football tech classes during the school year and after school

Harrison's football program succeeds because it's tough

video watching of opponents, Harrison football players put forth the effort it takes to have a consistently good program.

In fact, so much effort and dedication is taken to win that several of the players crumble under the pressure. This past season, 11 players quit football because it took too much effort. I wrote an article about this in the Harrison school newspaper back in November.

Even some of the "star" players question their willingness to play for a program such as Harrison's.

"Football is fun," said junior running back Marcus Woods, "but sometimes..." he trailed off when asked about his experiences playing with Harrison.

"It's all work and no play," said freshman and JV team captain Matt Balla. So much heart and so much effort is taken to put together a winning team. Three or four talented players don't make the team successful. If you aren't willing to put forth the effort then get off the field.

Denise Albrecht also poses the question, "what does this teach our children..." The truth is that this is a real world situation. Just like you go to work where you will get the most money and most recognition in your field, a student goes to play where he/she will be able to win and get the most recognition so they can go on and make the most money.

It teaches children a valuable lesson — that life is not fair. You play where you can get recognized. The society that we live in states that you do whatever you can to be the most successful. If that means not staying loyal to your friends and school and going to a rival school, then by all means do so in order to become successful.

In recruiting a problem at Harrison High School? As a junior at the school, I can say that I never heard of a case where a student is recruited to play. Students come on their own merits in order to win. As is anything in life, it's more fun if you're winning and you're on top.

Heart, determination and great leadership as well as school support all result in a winning program — not recruitment.

Chris Austin is a junior at Harrison High School.

GUEST OPINION

Education bashing

I take offense to the O&E's March 21 cartoon bashing public education.

When will society wake up and stop conveniently using public education as its scapegoat? Education starts at home, period. It is not the responsibility of public schools to raise society's children, but to teach them. When 20 percent of the kids come to school so ill-prepared due to the lack of a decent family life, the entire class suffers. Educators spend 80 percent of their time on the 20 percent of the students whose parents think it is not their responsibility to raise their own kid.

So go ahead, society, keep bashing public education. That blank stare on your kid's face is someone else's fault; not yours.

Keith Costello
Farmington Hills

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