

President's Letter

by Andrew Welch

e've been "on the Internet" a very short time relatively speaking -- we've only had a direct Internet connection for about 8 months or so, and have had our web site up and running for a couple of months less than that. Fact is, about many things Internet, I'm relatively clueless. Despite this, I'm going to complain, and join the ranks of scads of other self-righteous pundits.

One of the things I find quite annoying is junk eMail advertisements. I don't know what list I've been put on, but my name must have been bought and sold more than a harlot's affections. I don't know what it is -- maybe I've just been conditioned -- but junk mail from the good old post office doesn't bother me. I just chuck it, or sometimes even read it over and find interesting products/services.

However when a piece of junk eMail shows up, I turn into a dog-kicking dirtball, frothing at the mouth with indignation. Maybe it's the volume of "real" eMail I have to go through every day for a living (my regular mail generally consists of bills and junk, nothing urgent or interesting).

Or perhaps I consider my eMail one of the last bastions of privacy I have left. But really, I'm even nice to telemarketers when they call me at home, so I'm afraid my attempt to rationalize my sensitivity to junk eMail has fallen rather flat. I haven't even been on the Internet long enough to be a card-carrying member of the "Pompous Overlords of the Net" club.

All I know is that it irks me, and if you decide to eMail me about your Doggy Master 3000, you can expect to receive our SGI's core dump in your eMail box (it's a really large, ugly file that Unix boxes puke forth when they "crash").

One eMail-marketer caught me on what must have been a particularly bad day, and felt the full wrath of my darker side. He sent me several junk eMails in the space of an hour or so... and tried to use a dummy eMail address so I couldn't flood his eMail box with profanities... which annoyed me all the more, of course.

But you see, the downfall of these folks is that they are trying to sell you something, and thus must leave *some* way for you to get back in contact

with them. "Ah, a fax number" he thinks, as an evil grin crosses his face. "Let's see: QuicKeys? Check. Fax modem with auto-redial? Check. Copies of the junk mail, embellished with some words of wisdom? Check. Ready to rock."

That's right -- this gentlemen had 250+ pages of his own advertisement, with my special brand of graffiti scrawled on it, deposited in his fax machine. I was sure to check the "Invert Image" checkbox in Page Setup... for maximum toner/ink usage. I was sure to drop my 28.8 modem down to 2400 baud to prolong the agony too. God, I'm a sick person.

In any event, I received a rather frantic and apologetic call from him in the middle of the fax. Apparently, he'd tried to abort my "fax of love" by hanging up the fax machine several times, but my fax software diligently re-dialed to finish its mission.

He'd run out of paper, and apparently, the desire to have me as a potential customer in the brief span of an hour's time. He expressed his misgivings to me; I politely suggested that he not send me any more unsolicited junk eMail. "Don't worry!" was his reply, conveyed in a nervously jovial manner. Satisfaction sets in.

Now don't get me wrong; I'm not opposed to self-serving advertising if I ask for information on a particular type of product on, say, Usenet. That's an expression of interest in a public forum. In fact, when I was looking for a POP3 server for our SGI, it was just such a piece of eMail that landed a diligent and polite sales rep a sale.

But I have enough eMail I want to read, should read, or have to read -- I don't need any crud getting in the way. If my actions caused the aforementioned eMail-marketer to rethink the viability of his enterprise, so much the better.

Ah, that felt good. This is turning into an excellent form of therapy, I think.

Regards,

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Ambrosia Software, Inc.

