Do You Know What Junk Email Costs Your Business?

Thomas Fox is president of Tech Experts, southeast Michigan's leading small business computer support company.

I used to think of junk email (spam) as just minor nuisance. Not so anymore. Today, spam is a major problem that costs businesses more than $100 billion a year in lost productivity and mitigation and prevention measures.

Spam used to be sent primarily by small time hackers trying to sell hair restoration, fake university degrees, and of course, anatomy enhancement pills.

The junk mail to real mail ratio was small, and spam didn't take up a lot of room in email boxes. Spam didn't place a huge burden on email servers, and they were easy to block.

Today, small time scammers are still responsible for some of those spams. The majority, however, are the work of organized criminals who use spyware and botnets to flood inboxes with an unprecedented amount of junkmail.

Spam profits can be huge. Hot stock tip scams, where criminals use spam to artificially create interest in a stock and raise the share price, can net the spammers millions of dollars.

Phishing scams, designed to steal your identity, can provide criminals with access to a mass amount of credit card data and sensitive corporate information.

Estimates put the cost of phishing alone at more than $8 billion in 2009.

With so much money at stake, spammers are constantly looking for new ways to get their junk emails past spam filters and to make their scams appear more convincing.

It has also drove an increase in the volume of junk mail. More than 2.8 million emails are sent every second - over 247 billion per day. Over 90% of that is junk email.

The cost to business

So, how does spam cost your business money?

Lost productivity: Experts put the labor cost of deleting each junk email at around four cents. By itself, that's not all that significant.

Multiply that, though, by perhaps 20 employees, each deleting 50 junk emails per day, and you'll be spending over $14,000 over the course of a year.

Computer and network costs: Spam sucks up Internet bandwidth, and server storage space, both of which are significant costs to your business. This is especially true since a lot of spammers are using attachments to get around spam filters.

Security breaches and infections: Most malware and spyware infections are distributed via hacked websites. Even so, email has become more and more popular for infecting innocent users.
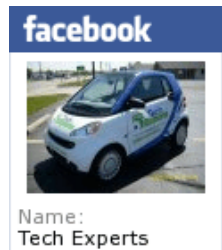
If your network becomes infected as the result of spammed spyware or malware, you'll be facing a potentially expensive clean-up operation.

Phishing emails can lead to the exposure of sensitive corporate or financial information.

What you can do

The most effective way to prevent spam is to block it before you see it. We have dozens of clients with

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Reduce Printing Costs With These Six Tech Tips

What About Remanufactured Toner Catridges?

Looking for a way to save money and increase use of "green" products in your business? Try using remanufactured toner cartridges, which have the same quality as new cartridges at a lower cost.

The quality of remanufactured toner cartridges has improved dramatically since they were introduced more than 20 years ago. High-quality remanufactured cartridges now undergo a process that makes them equivalent in performance, print quality and page yield to new models, and they meet all original equipment manufacturer (OEM) standards and specifications.

The current remanufacturing process requires cartridges to be disassembled and inspected to determine any problem areas. Worn components are replaced with new parts, all sections are cleaned, and a fresh supply of toner is added before the cartridge is resealed.

The environmental benefits of using remanufactured toner cartridges include keeping non-biodegradable material out of landfills and conserving the equivalent of three quarts of oil per cartridge.

It's important to note that it's illegal for a laser printer manufacturer to require you to use or purchase a particular brand of cartridge. An OEM cannot void your warranty simply because you choose different brands of supplies for a piece of equipment like a printer.

Printers are an essential part of daily business, and often, business owners struggle with ways to reduce the costs associated with printing office documents. Here are a few tips that will help keep printing costs in check.

1. Set the print quality to its lowest setting for day-to-day printing. Most printers automatically default to high-quality printing to make sure the pages come out looking good. However, these high-quality images require a lot of ink or toner which can cost you a pretty penny over the life of your printer.

For most print jobs, the lowest-quality setting will work just fine. When you need a sharper print job, you simply change the setting for that one document. How to change your printer's settings varies depending up on the type of printer.

In Windows, go to the "Start" menu and click on "Control Panel." Choose "Printers and Faxes," right click on the printer you wish to change and choose "Properties." While you're there, set the default to black and white to save on color ink and toner too. If black and white is fine for most day-to-day print jobs, you will save you a bundle on color ink.

2. Print more on every page. This will save ink as well as paper costs. Reduce the font size in a document by a point of two In just one year, going from 12 point to 9 point type, could save 3-5 reams of paper, per user.

3. Don't let your inkjet printer go for more than a few days without use. If it sits for long periods of time, the tiny jets in the printer cartridge can dry up causing print jobs to have white streaks. Correcting this causes a large amount of ink to be used. And for laser printer users, turn off the printer when it won't be used for a period of time. Keeping the printer's fuser hot takes a lot of energy.

4. Clean your printer frequently. Faint output, unprinted lines running across the page, or streaks on your printouts can indicated clogged nozzles or a dirty printer. Check your user's guide for the

A new multifunction printing technology has been announced by Xerox which uses solid inks and manages to reduce printing cost of color pages up to 62%.

recommended cleaning procedure for your printer.

5. Refill your cartridges. You can buy kits and do this yourself or you can buy refilled cartridges. The quality is just as good as new, but the cost is much lower. Plus, you're helping keep old cartridges out of the landfill.

6. Buy a laser or solid ink printer. Inkjet printers cost significantly more per page than laser printers. If you do a lot of printing, a laser or solid ink printer is an economical investment.

For example, this newsletter is printed on a Xerox Phaser 7400 color printer. The output is amazing, the printer is fast, and best of all, the cost per print is extremely affordable.

Business Junk Email Costs, Continued From Page 1

several hundred e-mail accounts currently utilizing our e-mail filtering system. We eliminate over 98% of the junk mail you normally would receive before our clients ever see it.

Our Experts Total Defense spam filtering system lets only the relevant and important messages come through.

You'll have a clean inbox every day, and your Blackberry won't ring all day with junk emails. You and your staff will become much more efficient and e-mail will be more useful again.

Plus, Experts Total Defense offers email archiving and off-site storage, saving valuable drive space on your servers.

You can use our filtering system if you have email hosted with us, or if you have your own in-house e-mail server (like Microsoft Exchange and Small Business Server). Give me a call if you'd like more information.

Tips to Optimize Your Laptop's Battery Life

Ryan Seymour is a PC hardware specialist and the Tech Experts Service Manager.

Laptop batteries... Ugh! Need I say more? We all know how annoying and unpleasant your laptop experience becomes when you find yourself rushing around for the nearest power source to keep those precious emails and spreadsheets alive.

It seems like the battery life on laptops lasts for only a couple hours, and if you're doing some heavy work that time can drastically decrease.

So I'm going to share some tips and tricks to keeping the life of your laptop batteries as strong, and long lasting as possible.

Defragment your hard drive

Believe it or not, keeping your computer's hard drive defragged on a regular basis is one of the key things you can do to improve your battery life.

The more efficient your hard drive works, the less power and time it needs to do its processing, which ultimately decreases the amount of power required to process.

Minimize multitasking

Keep the number of programs you have open and running down to a minimum.

For example, time and time again I see users that have a dozen or more programs running at the same time, when they are only using one or two of them.

Keeping programs that are not needed running increases the load on the CPU and wears the battery down. Try to keep only programs you are working with up, and eliminate anything extra.

Clean the battery

Keeping the battery contacts clean is another key point, and I'm amazed as to how many laptop owners have told me they've never once cleaned the terminal posts that connect the battery to the laptop, nor even thought about doing so.

Just like any other electronic device, or piece of equipment, laptops needs regular cleaning and maintenance.

Every couple of months or so, you can take a damp cloth with rubbing alcohol and wipe down the posts on the laptop, as well as the battery to keep a clean connection and keep the power transfer more efficient.

Make sure the power is off to the laptop, and that it isn't plugged into the AC power before you start cleaning.

Add more RAM

This may sound misleading, but having more RAM can actually help reduce the power consumption of the laptop by reducing the amount of virtual memory you are using.

Virtual memory writes to the hard drive, which does require more power than writing to the RAM. If you see your hard drive blinking constantly, you could benefit from more memory in your laptop.

Use Windows Power Options

Utilize the features of Windows Power Options. Simply go into Windows Control Panel, choose Power Options, and set your laptop to use the predefined power plan of "max battery."

This will ensure your laptop is getting the maximum optimization of power usage, while the computer is on or idle.

Turn off unneeded devices

Lastly, you can cut down on the use of external devices with your laptop. For example, if you're simply doing some photo editing, word processing, or just working in a program that requires no Internet connectivity, shut off the Wi-Fi and Bluetooth adapters. If your laptop screen has a backlight, you can turn the brightness down to save power. These types of adapters and devices consume a lot of power, even if you're not using them.

Another biggie is the fact that people love to charge all their gizmos and gadgets with their USB ports (iPods, phones, etc.) and this greatly affects the battery, and often can drain it in less than an hour.

These tips, along with a regular charging schedule will do wonders for the life of your battery. Remember, it is a best practice to keep your batteries on a regular charging schedule, and you should routinely completely charge and discharge your laptop batteries.

Consider A Spare Or Second Battery

One option you may not have considered when you bought your laptop was getting a spare battery. This item is a must for someone who is seriously on the road or in a remote location, where a long time is spent away from the power socket. Before you use a spare battery, ensure that it's fully charged.

If your laptop has some type of quick-swapping ability, when the power gets low, you can just eject your laptop's original, spent battery and quickly insert the spare battery. But be sure that your laptop can survive such a transplant before you attempt it! Perform a test swap in a noncritical situation, just to be sure.

If your laptop doesn't have the ability to hot-swap batteries, just turn off (or hibernate) the laptop when the original battery is nearly spent. Remove the old battery, insert the fresh one, and then turn the laptop on again. Keep the following points in mind:

• Label the batteries so that you don't get the two (or more) batteries confused and accidentally insert a dead battery.

• You can buy a spare battery from Tech Experts, or from online stores that sell extra batteries, such as iGo or Batteries.com.

Be wary of generic batteries! Always try to get a manufacturer's (or manufacturer-approved) battery for your laptop. Get anything less, and you run the risk of setting your laptop ablaze!

Selecting A Quality Domain Name For Your Business

Corey Bogedain is a network technician and web developer with Tech Experts.

As easy as it might sound, depending on your business, choosing the right domain name for your business can be a very difficult task.

There are many factors that you need to consider when choosing a proper domain name for your business.

Related to your business

First off you should have a domain name that reflects what your business is, does, or is about.

What I mean is, if you own a business related to toys have the word toys in the domain name or let's say computers maybe incorporate the word pc or computer in to the domain name like... www.qualitypcrepair.com.

Keep it simple

This is one of the most important factors of choosing a domain name. For example www.pcrepair.com. This way when people either see it on the side of the road or just coming across it on the Internet they will lock it in their heads very quickly.

It also makes things easier when people try to refer you to another person. They can just say something along the lines like "Hey I found this website called www.virusremovalexperts.com that can remove some of the toughest and nastiest infections that you can catch around."

Stick with letters and ".com"

Try not to set your business domain up with any numbers, if possible. Many people like to add numbers in their domain name. This can be a very bad idea since when people are being told the web address to go to, they tend to spell everything out.

For example www.july4th.com many people would think www.julyfourth.com. Avoid using dashes or underscores, too.

Yes it is very easy to say "check out my website pc dash repair.com" but it is also even simpler to tell them to go to pcrepair.com.

You'll also find there are a number of top-level domains. The top-level domain is the part after the period in the domain name, such as ".com."

There are hundreds of top-level domains, such as ".net," ".org," ".biz" and so on. None of those have the staying power or the ability to be memorized that ".com" does. Having a ".com" domain name also adds credibility to your business.

Keywords

Keywords are very important and every search engine uses words that the owner specifies from their website and allows the search engine to have the public use that to find your business.

Some search engines will use the words in the domain name as a keyword so that if you are a business that does computer repair you might want to use www. apluscomputerrepair. com which has a keyword computer and repair right in the domain.

Trademark

Another thing people do not look in to when choosing a good domain name is that if you're infringing on a trademark of someone else's business. This could lead to you losing your business.

Be sure to take a look at http://www.uspto.gov/main/trademarks.htm to make sure you are not infringing.

The best things you can do when looking for a great domain name for your business is to make a list of about ten to twenty domain names and organize them from the best to the worst that you can think of.

Start from the best and check them for availability. You will be surprised that fifty percent of them will be taken. This helps so that you actually sit down and think about what is best for your business.