

Spammers Find a Way to Sneak Through Filters

Devious email spammers are always searching for ways to fool spam filters into believing their communications are harmless. The latest trick involves clever copies of legitimate newsletters – something which many spam filters fail to detect.

The latest email spam trick sweeping the US involves spammers creating what appears to be a regular newsletter from a respected company. But as the recipient starts reading, a pop-up spammed image will appear on-screen. In many cases the newsletters are copied so faithfully they are able to not only confuse the reader, but their spam filter too.

Some unscrupulous spammers have even borrowed the content from legitimate newsletters – along with electronic advertisements from top brands like Amazon – in an effort to further convince readers that the communication is genuine.

A senior director of anti-abuse engineering at Symantec explained: “They are trying to mimic a legitimate newsletter as closely as possible, by inserting a single image or a link to one. It seems to be a combination of techniques to sneak through a filter, identifying it as legitimate to confuse the user “

Most anti-spam solutions will not block these emails because they bear such close resemblance to the real thing. Although many spam filters can be set to a more aggressive level, the danger then is that genuine email newsletters will also be blocked. There is no sure way of stopping email spammers in their tracks, although it seems in the US at least, the law is cracking down.

Just over a year ago a US internet service provider was awarded a record \$11.2 billion judgment against

a Florida man who sent millions of unsolicited e-mails advertising his mortgage and debt consolidation services. Although sending unsolicited commercial email is not in itself illegal, vast numbers of junk emails can seriously disrupt internet provider systems. And it IS illegal to send dishonest spam – for example anything which uses another company’s domain name or has a misleading subject line.

The man was also banned from using the internet for three years (although how this condition was enforced wasn’t explained...)

