WINNERS Notepad

More on Spam, the Bane of the Internet

By Ira Wilsker

Recently, here in the *Examiner*, I wrote about the report from the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) citing the prevalence and deception common in "unsolicited commercial email", more commonly referred to as "spam."

According to a report recently published by Ferris Research, it is estimated that spam will cost American businesses over $10 billion this year, considering computing resources, labor costs, and lost productivity. According to the email filtering service Brightmail, in the month of March 2003, 45% of all email was spam, compared to only 16% in January 2002, a 181% increase!

The FTC has created a website with good information on spam, including tips on reducing the volume

Bits & Bytes & Xp

By Siles Bazerman

A couple of months ago, I said I would detail the programs I am running on HAL and the reasons I use them instead of others. I became sidetracked over backup programs but will outline them now. I am still searching for the best backup or imaging solution and probably will be for quite a while.

Remember, HAL is my toy. The most practical things I do involve writing both this column and Model Railroading articles. I also use the internet a great deal. I do not use spreadsheets, presentations, or other programs in office suites. HAL is a PIII 60 MHZ computer. He has 512 Meg of 133 MHz memory, three hard drives, a 3.5 inch floppy drive, a CD-RW and a DVD+RW. I have an ATI All-in-Wonder Rage 128 AGP card. Sound os provided by a Creative SB PCI128(Esoniq 128 card and a three-speaker Labtec set. I have both a 56k dial-up modem and an ethernet adaptor feeding a DSL modem and a D-Link router. Printing is through an Epson Photo Stylus 875DC. I also have a PDA docking station and an IR port. Oh yes, a UPS is used to feed and control AC power.

That gives you some idea of what I use in the way of hardware. As I have previously stated, when I upgrade HAL the old parts go to Barbie (my granddaughters' game machine). Poor Barbie always gets hand-me-downs. Now that I have outlined the hardware I use, lets look at the software.

My operating system for HAL is WindowsXp, while Barbie runs on Windows98 Second Edition. I also have an old Compaq laptop that runs Windows98 Original edition. Word Processing is done using WordPerfect, from 5.2 for DOS to Perfect Office 11. Even though my first writing was done using TI's version of Microsoft Word, I prefer WP. No, I don't use reveal codes. I just started way back on an 8086 machine with it because the people I was supporting used it so I had to learn it. Since then it has been by choice, familiarity makes ease of use, plus it is much cheaper to purchase. At this time I am using WP 11 suite. I really do not see much difference from 10, but have been assured that there are some changes to improve functionality. You can save in almost any known word processing format, and can also publish to HTML, PDF, XML, and EDGAR (whatever that is).

Before I forget, I do practice "Safe Hex." It starts with a hardware firewall in my router, and includes Zone Alarm 3.7.202 (the free one), Norton Anti Virus 2003 Pro, Lavasoft Ad-Aware 6, and Panicware Pop-Up Stopper Pro. Is it overkill? Possibly, but I have never lost a system to a virus, have little spyware getting on my system and that bit is cleared out regularly., and I know who phones home or even out. I get little spam because I do not readily post on newsgroups, and when I do I have munged my address enough that the spybots will not pick it up. Most of my posting and correspondence are through

Telephone Help Line

PROGRAM/SOFTWARE	NAME	PHONE	TIME
CompuServe	Cathy Grammer-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
CorelDraw 5	George Margolin	949-645-5950	Most times
CorelDraw & Ventura & PhotoPaint	Sunny Lockie	949-644-0103	6-10 p.m. weekdays / 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends
Hardware	Jonathan Means	714-542-1653	6-9 p.m.
Internet	Cathy Grammer-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Novell, NT & Networking	Jonathan Means	714-542-1653	6-9 p.m.
Quicken & Quickbooks	Max Lockie	949-720-8170	6-10 p.m. & weekends
Windows 95,98,Me,Xp	Siles Bazerman	714-897-2868	9 a.m.-8 p.m.
Word for Windows	Cathy Grammar-Margolin	949-645-5950	6-10 p.m. & weekends
WordPerfect Windows	Sunny Lockie	949-644-0103	6-10 p.m. weekdays / 9 a.m.-10 p.m. weekends

General Meeting August 9
Orange Coast College
9:00 a.m.-12:00 noon
in Science Room #149

RUDY WOLF

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PURPOSE

WINNERS, a computer association, is a volunteer organization providing a forum for sharing information and experiences related to Windows-based software, encouraging ethical use of computers and software, and offering service to our communities.

MEMBERSHIP

Annual membership is $20.00 for individuals; $5.00 each additional family member.

MEETINGS

WINNERS generally meets the second Saturday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon at Orange Coast College in the Science Building, Room #149, 2701 Fairview, Costa Mesa.

FUTURE MEETING DATES

★ August 9
★ September 13
★ October 11
★ November 8

received, as well as ideas on preventing spam. This site is online at www.ftc.gov/spam, and contains much helpful information.

As has been stated previously in this column, email addresses are typically harvested from websites, newsgroup postings, chat rooms, and other sources. Many web merchants also sell lists of customers, and there are also some Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and email providers that sell subscriber lists. Many of the free email subscription services offering jokes, recipes, news, and other information, support themselves by selling subscriber information. Many software publishers sell lists of registered users. Some viruses, worms, Trojans, and spyware may harvest the users' personal email addresses, and possibly even hijack an address book. Once harvested, email addresses, often millions of them, are compiled and sorted, and then sold and resold countless times.

Some spam mail is sent using even more insidious means, such as by software installed by some of the popular file sharing programs, concealing the real source of the spam. Another method, recently reported on securityfocus.com, in an article "Rise of the Spam Zombies," is the rapidly spreading use of worms and viruses as a means of sending spam mail from infected computers. One especially nasty Trojan is the "Proxy-Guzu," which makes the infected computer and Internet connection available to spammers, who can then send spam from that computer, again obscuring the real source. If the source is traced, it will point back to the infected computer. "Proxy-Guzu" may be installed on the victims' computers after the users open emails claiming to have images from an "adult" webcam, or other forms of pornography. Another backdoor Trojan worm, "Jeem," has been around for about a year, and enables unauthorized access to the

victims' computers for the purpose of "laundering" spam email, again making the true source undetectable, and showing the source as the infected computers. This again emphasizes the oft-stated necessity to have updated antivirus software installed, as well as the need for a firewall and anti-spyware software.

The FTC has suggestions on making your email address less vulnerable to harvesting. The FTC suggests that your email addresses not be posted to the public. Many users have public email addresses used on websites, newsrooms, and chats, and private email addresses only given to family and trusted friends, but never publicly used. Another FTC suggestion is to be careful about submitting your email address to a web merchant or other website; read the sites' privacy statements, being sure that your email address will not be sold or used for other purposes. Refuse to give your email to any site that will not protect it, and opt-out of any sites that have previously been joined. Of course, once an address is available and harvested, it can never be totally removed from spam lists. If a site with a privacy policy also offers to share your information with "selected partners," be sure to refuse such sharing.

Many ISPs now offer some form of email filtering, which can offer a varying quality of protection from spam (and viruses). If your ISP offers it, sign up for it; some ISPs offer active filtering, while others simply subscribe to one of the many "blacklists" that block emails from all senders in a block of addresses. Many blacklists also stop large amounts of legitimate email along with the spam, and often block innocent senders who are blacklisted, as 46% of spam (according to the FTC) has forged "From:" headers.

There are now many spam filtering software products that can be installed on personal computers. Some are from the leading antivirus publishers and other major software

publishers, and others are independently produced. Much of the technology is immature, and some of the products are of dubious utility, but most offer some degree of protection from spam. I have tried several, and had mixed results, none being totally accurate. The highest success rate I found when experimenting with spam filters was the commercially available Brightmail service. Brightmail is no longer available directly to individuals (used to be free), but many ISPs subscribe to its service. Emails are routed through the Brightmail server, where each message is electronically scanned for spam, and sorted. "Clean" email is forwarded to the subscriber, and the email filtered out is available on the Brightmail site for a limited period, where the user can inspect it, and approve it for receipt, if desired.

Federal legislation controlling spam is making its way through Congress, but there is a powerful lobby resisting the measure. Federal legislation will also be ineffective in stopping spam from foreign sources, but something needs to be done to decrease the rate of spam. Some pundits are currently calling spam the biggest threat to the Internet, even worse than viruses, worms, and Trojans.

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DVD X Copy

By Terry Currier

From 321 Studios, DVD X Copy helps you make backups of your DVD discs for personal use. That is the key; this is not for making copies of your movies to give to friends. Even so, the Motion Picture Association of America is not happy with them. They have tried to stop 321 Studios from selling DVD X Copy. Last year, 321 Studios sued nine major motion picture production companies in an effort to fend off their threats to stop the sale of its software products, DVD Copy Plus and DVD X Copy, that allow consumers to make personal backup copies of their DVDs. To 321 Studios' credit, they make it clear they do not support the illegal coping of DVDs.

They make it clear in their warning boxes. Just starting the program makes a box comes up reminding you to respect the rights of copyright holder, and you have to click on the I Agree button. Also on that box is a check-for-updates button. 321 Studios does a very good job of keeping their program updated. Next a box pops up to ask you if the copy you are make is from a rental or personal copy.

That said, why use it? Well, as shown on a survey from their web site, most DVDs get destroyed by kids or pets. Now there are portable DVD players that you can carry anywhere. They are even installed in mini vans. I wish we had that opportunity when our kids were growing up. There would have been far fewer fights. The point is, if you bought a DVD and like it a lot, you

really should not risk damaging or losing it on trips. This goes at home also. If kids are going to be handling the disk, make a copy of the disk and have them use that one.

The opening for copying shows you the title and size. You see from this that a movie which is 110 minutes is over the 4.7Gb size of the DVD and will take two disks. It will automatically select where to break the movie up, or you can select the place yourself. Once started, everything is automatic. The movie is read and prepared for copying. While it is preparing the DVD you can still work on the computer. However, while it is burning they do recommend you not do anything else. In other words, there is no burn proof for DVDs yet. It burns at the rate of your burner's speed, so you will be waiting a while. I did try stopping the burn of the second

Lockergnome's Win XP Tips

by Chris Pirillo, Chief Lockergnome

DVD then going back and starting with it. No problem, the advanced options allowed me to do that—for example, if you were short on time and could only do the first. There is no pause on it, so be prepared all the way through.

When done, a splash screen comes up on the start, stating it is a copy made with DVD X Copy. Also you can not make a copy of the copy; the program will not let you. The real question is, of course, how does it work? I have not done many, but found no problems. I ran the DVD in my computer and in a DVD player and found no problems.

Is it worth it? You have to judge that by how many DVDs you have and chance of damage to them. Personally, I think it is. It's your money—protect your investment. There are two new versions out since I got this one. DVD X Copy XPRESS will make the copies onto one disk instead of two. It also helps restore a scratched or defective disk. Price of the XPRESS is $59 direct from 321 Studios (after $10 rebate). Going for the gold, they have DVD X Copy Gold, an improved version of the software that includes all of the features of two previous products, DVD X Copy and DVD X Copy XPRESS. The updated program is priced at $99 (after $20 rebate). New features in DVD X Copy Gold let users copy most DVDs within an hour and record all features of an original CD, also fitting each backup copy onto a single DVD disk. It also copies all menus and special features. If you want to try it out, go to their web site and download a trial version. It will let you copy three disks.

http://www.dvdxcopy.com

Windows Update Transfer Details

Windows Update hasn't been faring too well lately; it's caused a few users some unnecessary headaches. It'll say something along the lines of: "Here, I think you need this patch." When, in fact, you don't. Mike Vigneau passed along an interesting tip for those of us who want to know what's happening when we're using this particular Microsoft tool.

This tweak has been confirmed with Windows XP and 2000 systems, although it may work in earlier versions of Windows as well. What we're going to do is set the transfer dialog to "debug" mode. This way, we can keep an eye on what's happening—at each stage in the process. Fire up the Registry editor and fly to HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE \ SOFTWARE \ Microsoft \ Active Setup. Enter a new String Value and label it: "SteppingMode" (sans quotes).

Edit the String and give it a value of Y. The next time you use Windows Update, its actions should be a little more descriptive. If you ever wish to disable the verbosity, simply switch this value to N. If you want another way to grab these downloads, consider using the Corporate version of Windows Update (a quick search on Google will provide the appropriate URL).

Driver Queries and Wasted Space

What's the quickest way (in Windows XP) to get a list of the currently loaded drivers including module names and descriptions)? Get out of the GUI; you're better off at the command line for this tip. Browse to your desktop folder for simplicity's sake usually found at C:\ Documents and Settings \ [Username] \ Desktop). Now, at the command line, enter: "driverquery /V > drivers.txt" (sans quotes). That /V provides a more "verbose" output. Other notable switches include /FO (which formats the output as a table, list, or comma separated values) and /SI (which provides details about any signed driver).

Open that freshly-created drivers.txt file and you'll be in business. On a more entertaining note, do you remember the music that played when you first started Windows XP? Ya know, the one that sounded like an Enigma tune? If you wanna hear it again, you can find it at C:\ WINDOWS \ system32 \ oobe images \ title.wma. Of course, if you want to free up 3 MB worth of space, you can delete it and the intro.wmv file sitting next to it.

Built-in Spell Checker

Quite honestly, there's no excuse for spelling errors anymore. Typos were frequent in the days of the typewriter; misspellings were common in the handwritten letter era. Though, there's virtually no quick way to spell check a word when you're in anything other than a "Microsoft Office Spell Checker" supported application.

Lockergnomie Tom Maenner had issues with the feature in Outlook Express after he upgraded to Windows XP. "I had to locate 'csapi3t1.dl_' on the Windows XP CD and expand it as 'csapi3t1.dll' in this directory: C:\ Program Files \ Common Files \Microsoft Shared \Proof. Worked like a charm."

I'm not certain if this will work on every machine, but it's worth trying if the tool isn't operational for you. If you dork up words every other minute, consider turning on the "Spell Check before Sending" feature in your default e-mail client. It's and its, than and then, their and they're, or any other homophone may slip through the cracks. Butt at least you won't look like a total fool—just a parshal one. Even online, credibility counts.

CompactFlash Formatting

Digital Media (the non-Lockergnome kind) is wonderful when it works. Most people use it in their digital camera or PDA (as do I). Transferring data from a portable device to the PC is relatively painless. Lockergnomie Glen Fabian pointed out something recently posted to COMPACTFLASH.ORG (the CompactFlash Association): "By default, Windows XP will format any CompactFlash card of 64MB or more with FAT32 format. Digital cameras and other devices use the FAT (FAT16) format and can not operate with a FAT32 formatted card. Either format your CompactFlash card in your camera or select FAT format to format your CompactFlash card in a Windows XP PC."

Even if you don't use CF media or Windows XP, this is something to keep in mind. And do you need another reason to own a laptop? My Pocket PC is a Walkman of sorts; I put new MP3s on it every day. However, transferring them via any USB (1.1) connection is slow as molasses.

I picked up a PCMCIA CF adapter for under five bucks a few weeks ago (they're inexpensive to begin with). Trust me. That will speed up the process. Visit PCMCIA.ORG for more information.

Media Access Control

It's no secret that 802.11b networks are not very secure; we've discussed this point at length in the past. When you enable wireless connectivity through your access point, you should filter out non-registered MAC (Media Access Control) addresses if your WAP supports this feature. A MAC address is unique to every network card on the market. Any Wi-Fi device may see your wireless access point, but it won't be able to use the WAP unless its MAC address matches the (manually entered) filter. Nice, huh?

Okay, so how do you determine a network card's MAC address? Either use WINIPCFG or IPCONFIG. You're looking for a hexadecimal string—twelve digits long (six sections of two hex characters each). This is easy to find when you're on your own machine, but what about those connected to your network?

As your home network expands, this information will become increasingly important. You could use your router's DHCP table to view the addresses, or you could use Windows XP's GETMAC command line utility (also available as a free Windows 2000 Resource Kit download).

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Actual Lockergnome's Tip Book

Publishing. Chris also hosts a daily TechTV and weekly radio show. He is the Windows columnist for Smart Computing's Computer Power User magazine and the content coordinator for the annual Gnomedex technology conference. Visit

http://www.Lockergnome.com

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subscription groups which are moderated and do not allow attachments.

I do get my share of letters from Nigeria and have even "won" a once-every-three-years lottery three times in the last four months. Just send them my bank account number and Social Security number, and all my vital statistics. Any internet purchasing is done through secure sites (SHTML) only.

Most of the spam I do get is from people I know who click yes on everything, don't run anti-virus programs and have spyware by the dozens on their machines, trojans galore, and transmit spam to their entire mailing list. Also, they love to forward messages to huge lists. They never heard of Carbon Copy or Blind Carbon Copy. I have received messages with 40 addresses in the header.

By the way, I use Internet Explorer and Outlook Express for all this. They are already included in the package and they do work. I use MS Java and not the Sun Java. I do have Mozilla on my computer for those occasions when IE is refused. I also sometimes use Cute FTP, but need it less and less as IE gets updated. The other communication program I use is Mighty Fax. I regularly download a medical metering device to my computer and then fax the results to my Doctor. That is why I have a dial-up modem. You cannot fax, without a paid service, through DSL.

I have rambled on and only touched on a very few of the programs I use. I have not covered the graphics, photo, and camera related programs. Nor have I touched upon the recording and playback programs or the video programs including sending to my TV and recording from my VCR.

I guess that will come next time.

Did You Know?

By Bob Elgines
Editor, Colorado River Computer Club,
Lake Havasu City, Arizona
elginesz@redrivernet.com

Audio or sound problems?

Double click on the little Speaker Icon located on the right Task-Bar! Up pops an Audio Mixer allowing you to set all level inputs and the volume output. Make sure they are set between mid and full range. Some programs will set the Wave level to zero and all of sudden your sound doesn't work. Also you can go to Options, then Properties and select record. Here you can adjust record levels and what to record from such as CD, Mike, etc., by selecting which one is active.

Memory

How much Memory or RAM (Random Access Memory) is needed? This depends on your OS (Operating System). See Chart below:

Is there something wrong with this picture? Yes, the new OS can do more, but less of the old routines. Also programmers have gotten very sloppy, and of course that is why more errors are generated. Their feelings are properly, "Well Memory is cheap, who cares!" I believe XP has finally improved as a working OS without too many blue screens of death.

What speed CD-ROM should I buy?

Well this is a good question since most CD disks operate lower than 16X (1X is the original speed of an Audio CD of 150 bits/sec of data transfer, therefore a 2X is 300 bits/sec, etc.). The biggest problem today is the delay in the Start Time in reading data from a CD. If you time it, most take 8 to 9 seconds to start; if it is longer than 10 seconds problems will occur with programs and windows trying to transfer data. It

could destroy a CD-R disk while you are recording by letting your CD-R (Recorder) Read Buffer go dry (new CD-RW drives and software have protection for this), because with an empty buffer your CD-R will quit writing and then you just produce a coaster (bad CD). So anything above a 16X doesn't mean much, just a sales thing, but you need a Multi-Read CD-ROM or DVD that will read all types of CDs, CD-Rs, CD-RWs (Read/Write CD-Rs).

How do you read what version of DirectX that is installed in your system, and how much memory is on your video (or display) card used to drive your monitor?

These are some questions asked when installing certain types of programs. For Windows '98, go to Start/Run and type in DXDIAG, then click on OK. For all Windows, go to Programs/Acessories/System Tools, then click on Tools/DirectX. Here you can find out all kinds of information. Don't you wish you knew this before you purchased your machine. The latest DirectX Driver is version 9 (nine), but beware some video programs will not operate. Click on the DISPLAY tab and read your Video Card memory. You should have at least 2 MB, some new programs require 4 MB minimum. Of course you can have more and what this means is larger blocks of video can be transferred without interrupts, giving you better looking video output and larger screen operation. I recommend a min of 8 MB for 15 inch monitors and a min of 16 MB for larger ones.

Most video cards now start with 64 MB of DDR RAM.

How do I get rid of those icons on the right task bar?

Most of these icons have a little program running in the back ground and use up valuable memory resources. The Speaker & Monitor icon do not use up any memory resources, but most of the others do. To get rid of them temporarily do a right mouse click and select Close, but to get rid of them for good in Windows go to Start then Run. Type in MSCONFIG and click on OK. Now go to the tab on top and click on Start-Up. This brings up a list of all those icons. Do not uncheck the following four items: Taskbar Display Controls, ScanRegistry, SystemTray, and LoadPowerProfile. After un-checking the ones you

don't want to come up on startup, click on Apply, then OK. You can restart windows now or wait until later. If you use a CD-R this is very important. Also if you are going to defrag your hard drive some of these items should be turned off (or closed, along with your screen saver) or the Defrag Program will keep starting over and over and never complete the job.

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General Meeting

Our own Rudy Wolf is going to share his expertise on digital photos:

- **Taking them**
- **Retouching them**
- **Putting them into albums**
- **and many other great subjects**

August 9   9 a.m. to 12 noon
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