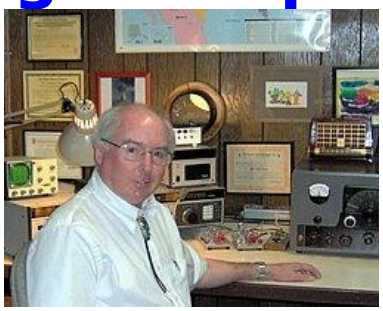


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IT Solutions

Resisting The Spam Flood



By Mike Langner

[November 2025] If you use email, chances are great that you get a dose of spam every day. Is there a simple way to prevent the majority of it? Is it worth the effort – or is he value of email permanently tainted.

One of the benefits of being retired is that I have the time to look at my computer screen and ask "Why is that happening?"

This refers to the almost 200 spam messages I get every day. There are ads for medications, various nutrients to prevent problems, stock tips, ads from stores, neighborhood email lists, and so many more.

So, yes, I do ask "Why is that happening? What the *%#@% did I click on??"

WHERE DOES IT ALL COME FROM?

From the earliest days of the Internet, there have always been those who read – or scour, using software – email lists and websites to capture email addresses.

If you are interested, you can buy millions of addresses from them for very modest amounts of money. Some claim to be "honest" lists, perhaps containing a contact address for every radio station in the US – or world. Others simply provide addresses to spammers.

Additionally, any time you provide your email address for something – even some companies with whom you do business – you at risk of ending up in a file run by some data miner – or data scraper. Have you seen addresses like "tom at domain.com." Sorry, the software knows to replace the "at" with @. Worse, if anyone to whom you have sent email gets hacked, there is a great chance their address book was grabbed – and your address ends up on one of these databases.

One group sells to another and, before long, if you have posted to a list, website, or signed up for a subscription to a magazine quite often your address is shared with advertisers (Note: this is *not* the case with the BDR!) – literally all sorts of possibilities – chances are your email is on some list. And that list is being shared – a lot.

Is there anything that can be done to stop – or slow – the resulting flood of spam?

INVESTIGATION

As I look into the situation with my email, I have to admit it seems like several of the factors mentions may be responsible for what has happened to me and my email address.

True, in addition to personal emails, I do subscribe to our local SBE and EAS email list. But what has led to the veritable flood of spam that turns up each day?

So, I started looking at the headers of the emails and writing down IP addresses from which they originate. There is an option in most all email readers to let you see the origination point for any email and the path it took to get to you. Then you can go to WHOIS, the Internet database of all ISPs, a learn from where the email originated. It might be from another country, or a company here at home.

A few WHOIS lookups led me to Salesforce, a customer contact and relations manager company in San Francisco.

SALESFORCE

Salesforce is a business that is in the mailing list and contact maintenance business.

Unfortunately contact maintenance these days often means mailing out the electronic version of junk mail in great quantities. There are several of these "services" which do provide a way for people and companies to send emails to a large number of clients (or prospects), presumably without running into problems with email servers like gmail or yahoo that slow or block email sent to any large number of addresses. Salesforce is one of them.

INCOMING!

Apparently, SalesForce leases access to business users for their use in publicizing their products and services.

Since the only difference between maintaining and creating customer relations is whether or not the customer actually wants the material being sent, Salesforce apparently does not consider itself a spammer.

Nevertheless, the more I looked, the more I turned up several IP address ranges they recommend their clients enable [whitelist] to make certain that their communications come through. For someone who is not a Salesforce customer, the list looked to me like a great set of ranges from which to block ranges that are sending me spam.

BUT CAN YOU BLOCK THEM?

My first thought was to just block those ranges. But it turns out that it is not quite so simple.

As an example, I use Norton Anti-Virus to filter incoming emails. Every day Norton flags a number of spam emails, some of which come from Salesforce IP addresses, and some of which do not. I have no idea if Salesforce knows how much spam is being sent from their IP addresses, but I would wager that they choose not to ask and not to know an Internet version of "don't ask, don't tell."

Still, a great deal of the spam I am getting comes from: 128.245.0.0 through 128.245.255.255 and 136.146.0.0 through 136.147.255.255. In this morning's batch of spams, Norton flagged

image.info.financetechreport.com as a scam. Most recently, the IP address from which I receive the greatest number of spam emails is the Salesforce range 128.245.0.0 through 128.245.255.255. (If you have a firewall that allows blocking IP address ranges, you may find the attached list of Salesforce IP ranges interesting.)

Unfortunately, if you, as I do, have Norton Anti-Virus, plugging these ranges (or some of them) into Windows Defender Firewall With Advanced Security (at least on Windows 11) on client computers will not accomplish anything, according to Internet reports, as Norton installs its own firewall which, in current versions, does not allow blocking IP ranges.

Now I am back to finding a way to continue using Norton (or switching to some other security program) and blocking IP ranges that are frequent spammers! The main problem is "false positives" where I have to check my spam/trash emails frequently so as not lose something important because some AI algorithm at the ISP "thinks" it is spam. Yes, it happens regularly.

FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

So, what can you do?

Some IT people like to play "whitelist" and block anything from someone not in their address book. The theory is if all email is blocked, no spam gets through. On the other hand, one fairly large group of stations tried this, only to find that ad agencies could not send them email, as they were not on the whitelist.

Another tactic that usually does not work well is to "unsubscribe" from what is clearly spam. All that will do is alert them that you are at a "live" address. Be very careful using an unsubscribe button.

On the other hand, most email readers allow you to set up filters that will automatically delete any email featuring the IP address or words you specify. You probably can see three or four words/phrases that are common in spam emails. For instance, I block anything that comes from "Stock winner," or "Diabetes Cure," or has as a subject "You have been selected," "You are already a winner," "Urgent Password Notice," "You're eligible," and similar things (sexually explicit subjects, for example).

You may notice that more than a few spams have a listed "street adcdress" – real or not – in common with other spams. Filter on that. One such is a street in Manchester, NH.

Some wish to filter anything with "no-reply" as the ReplyTo: field. Do it carefully, as too many companies now do this so they do not have to interact with you.

Just take care, so as not to delete emails from people you want to send to you. It only takes one or two letters difference to make a filter overly aggressive of useless.

ALTERNATIVE EMAILS

If your domain permits it, you should set aside one of more email addresses for non-personal and/or non-business email. They then can filter together in your inboxes.

An email address like tomjones+23@gmail.com or tomjones+finance1@gmail.com will not immediately be trashed, but will let you know which company you supplied it to is the source of future spam. It then is easy to either call the company and complain, or filter all email to tomjones+23 to trash.

Yes, it takes a moment. But it will quickly identify anything coming from a bad actor and their "service."

A CAUTION

One caveat well, maybe two.

You may have a supplier or client that uses their services who you would not want to block.

Also, I have sent several emails to the Salesforce Contact Us expressing that a number of its IP addresses are being used to send spam no reply from Salesforce.

Just FYI! Of course, your mileage may vary!

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Here is a list of IP addresses that I have found seem to resolve to Salesforce.

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Over the years, Mike Langner has been a broadcast engineer, station owner, inspector in the Alternate Broadcast Inspection Program (ABIP), and SECC Chair for New Mexico. You can contact Mike at:

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