

Cut #10: Blocking SPIM

Jennifer Clemente with Akiba Saeedi

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CLEMENTE: Welcome to ShortCuts, a weekly online broadcast brought to you by IBM Workplace. Together with the industry experts we're here to help you get the most of everyday Internet and e mail tools to make your life online more productive and more fun.

If you've got a question, we'll find the answer. Just write us at cuts@us.ibm.com. I'm Jennifer Clemente. This week's question came from our mailbag: What is the best way to deal with SPIM or SPAM over IM?

On the phone with us today is ShortCuts' instant messaging expert, Akiba Saeedi. With 10 years experience at IBM, Akiba specializes in portal, real time collaboration and knowledge management tools with IBM's Lotus brand.

Welcome to ShortCuts, Akiba. First off, what is SPIM?

SAEEDI: Hi, Jen. Thanks, great to be here. Well, SPIM, as you said, SPAM Over IM, is unsolicited messages that are coming to you through your instant messaging system just like you get those unwanted e mails and just like you get those unwanted phone calls at home.

CLEMENTE: So, Akiba, what is the best way to deal with SPAM over IM?

SAEEDI: Well, let me start with the public instant messaging, because that's really where it's more of a prevalent issue. There are ways that you can set your preferences to minimize people not being able to see you who aren't in your contact list, or only allowing certain people to contact you.

And each of the public systems do allow you to do that. In fact, there's a nice little summary of how to do it depending on which one you might be using. If you just actually search on SPIM, one of the first research returns is a Wikipedia site that kind of goes through, if you're using Yahoo! here's how you do it; if you use AOL, here's how you do it, et cetera.

So that's just kind of a little tip to be able to do that yourself. If you're using a corporate instant messaging system, something like Sametime, that's actually not a worry for you because the security built into a corporate system is meant to block those kinds of messages from coming in.

And the only people that can actually contact you are people who are authenticated to the directory that's been set up by your company. And so only those that can access your company resources are those that can contact you.

CLEMENTE: So what if I want to use a public instant messenger at my workplace?

SAEEDI: Well, every company has a different policy. And so one of the things you want to do as a user is you definitely want to check what your corporate policy is.

Many companies are banning the use of public instant messaging services because if you think about the instantaneousness of instant messaging, it actually provides a much stronger security risk than e mail ever did.

I mean, you remember when viruses were spread by e mails being sent, and you...but you can kind of tell that there's something a little fishy about it. But with an instant messaging virus being spread, it gets hold...it can get hold of your contact list and immediately send pings out to everybody on your contact list. And it looks like it's coming from you, and the nature of instant messaging is that you click right away. It's within seconds.

So if you think about how fast something can spread in this way, it's actually very...it can be very, very dangerous. And there are also, there are companies out there who provide value added services around corporate systems even and can help [you] things like content filtering and compliance services.



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But they also have, some of them will help you put up roadblocks. Companies like Iconics and Facetime, and there's one called IM Logic that's now owned by Symantec, some of them have capabilities that allow you to actually control and block people from getting out to those public services to help you enforce the policy that your company has set.

CLEMENTE: Well, that sounds great, Akiba. Thanks for letting us know what we can take advantage of in light of the SPIM risks.

For a transcript of today's show, visit us on the Web at ibm.com/shortcuts. There you'll find more information on this week's topic.

And again, if you've got a question for our experts, write us at cuts@us.ibm.com. From all of us at ShortCuts, thanks for listening.

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