

Re: Responding to Spam

Source: <http://www.derkeiler.com/Newsgroups/comp.security.misc/2003-10/0041.html>

From: Dave (*shuvit_at_127.0.0.1*)

Date: 10/02/03

Date: Thu, 2 Oct 2003 08:41:01 -0700

"Lord Shaolin" <abuse@127.0.0.1> wrote in message
news:vnnt4d590de707@corp.supernews.com...

> "Dave" <shuvit@127.0.0.1> wrote in message

> news:vnmafir9tj1m68@corp.supernews.com...

>> My question is this. Why do email programs allow hidden codes that

>> respond

>> automatically to emails that are opened? Seems like this would be the

>> easiest thing in the world to block.

>>

>> A few months ago, I discovered to my horror, that Microsoft Outlook was

>> sending such responses on my behalf. It's no wonder I got flooded with

>> everything from Nigerian scam letters to child pornography. Now, I'm

>> using

>> Eudora, and assuming it doesn't do this. I still see lots of porn,

>> previewed without ever clicking on a link, but it's mostly to my old

email

>> address.

>

> There are other ways than read receipt..

>

> If they put a 1 pixel gif or jpg in the mail linked to a cgi/php/asp

script

> with an ID number specific to you and your email address and you read it

> HTML enabled (which the majority do) it will confirm you exist and have

> opened said mail.

>

> Why do e-mail clients allow this?

>

> They don't if you set them up/use them properly :)

> --

My Outlook setup was done by our corporate IT department (a group heavily
focused on Windows), and I never bothered to question it or dig into the
details of Outlook. I and many others did complain about the spam, and it
was in one of those conversations that I was told about the automatic
responses to spam. I was also told to turn off the default "preview" mode
in Outlook. That still leaves a few lines showing, and I'm not confident

that this truly eliminates any "repsponses".

I have now gone back to Eudora (in defiance of IT policy), and I am using the default options – "Do not allow executables in HTML content" and "Warn me when I launch a program from a message". These defaults also include "Automatically download HTML graphics", which I assume is safe, although it does shove some porn "in my face".

I have a bit more confidence in Eudora, but I still worry. I have no problem reading HTML, and so far, I have not gotten any warnings about embedded executables. In fact, the only messages I can ever recall with embedded executables were the ones from Swen, which my Norton AV now deletes before they ever get to Eudora.

At this point I'm ready to give up on making sure all my programs are "set up properly", and try a different strategy. I'm told that XP-Pro (which I am now running) has robust separation of user accounts (like Linux). So I should be able to do my email and web browsing under a throwaway user account, and keep all my important stuff under a different username. The worry still is that a virus loose in the throwaway account can get at other users' files.

Maybe the only solution is a separate computer. I have an old one I can use with Windows 95, but I hate having to clutter my office with a third computer, add more to my electric bill, etc. Also, I don't like that by making that one my "low security" computer, I may be causing problems for others if it gets infected with something like Swen.

– Dave