



THE MAURITIUS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
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All About Spam

Spam is a very real problem that many people have to deal with on a daily basis. It is commonly defined as unsolicited commercial email and is a powerful advertising channel for many products and services. As a result, spamming has become a profitable business, driven by the low cost of sending email compared to other direct marketing techniques. The high return on investment for spammers has resulted in an overwhelming volume of unwanted messages in personal and business email boxes.

The recent onset of fraudulent spam variants such as phishing and spoofing pose an even greater risk than the spam volume clogging email servers. Spammers use techniques such as phishing and spoofing to fool users into opening messages that, at first glance, appear innocent.

Phishing is a specific type of spam message that solicits personal information from the recipient. Phishers use social engineering techniques to fool end users into believing that the message originated from a trusted sender, making these attacks especially dangerous because they often cheat victims into divulging bank account information or credit card numbers.

Spoofing is a deceptive form of spam that hides the domain of the spammer or the spam's origination point. Spammers often hijack the domains of well-known businesses or government entities to make spam filters think the communication is coming from a legitimate source.

Nowadays spammers are more crafty than ever before and have begun blending elements of both phishing and spoofing into their messages, further spinning their web of deception. The toxic combination of spoofing and phishing presents a major threat that can trick anyone into providing personal information to a stranger.

In Mauritius, the spamming problem is gaining magnitude and there is a need to have a concerted approach to address this issue. According to Telecom Plus Ltd, one of the internet service providers, about 65% of e-mail messages received at their level are spam and most of the spam originate from overseas. Without remedial action, the country runs the threat of being seen as a safe haven for spammers and there is a possibility that legitimate email traffic from Mauritius to other countries, which have anti-spam legislation, could be blocked.

Despite the fact that there is no silver bullet to eliminate spam entirely, the incidence of spam has to be reduced and controlled in order not to constitute a serious impediment to Internet use for consumers and users, and a significant roadblock to the development of

e-commerce, e-government, and online public services, thereby reducing the social value of the internet.

For all these reasons, there is a growing need to solve the problem of spamming that threatens the interests of all. The National Computer Board (NCB) has set up an Anti-Spam Committee comprising the public and private sector where the Chamber is represented. The key role of the Committee is to co-ordinate activities at the national level about combating spam.

The battle against spam will be waged through four main channels proposed by Anti-Spam Committee:

1. General Awareness for users and businesses
2. Guidelines and Best Practices For ISPs and Other Commercial Organisations
3. Anti-Spam Legislation
4. International Co-operation

If Mauritius is to become a Cyber Island and ICT sector the fifth pillar of our economy, then we have to address the spamming problem as it imposes a cost burden. Businesses pay for it in the time lost as their employees sift through spam to get to their real email, in their network administrators' time, in congestion on their local networks, and in connection charges. Spammers are taking resources away from users and service suppliers without compensation and without authorization.

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