Pre-Reading Activities

A: Vocabulary

Today's article is about a serious email problem. Below are some words from today's article but the letters are scrambled. Read the meaning for each word and then unscramble the letters to make the word.

1. **mpas** ⬜ - *unwanted emails (e.g. advertisements for products or websites) which are often sent to many addresses at the same time*

2. **eiaml** ⬜ - *also known as **electronic mail***

3. **erwaftso** ⬜ - *data programs etc used to do different tasks on a computer*

4. **fgiltrein** ⬜ - *using a software program to check emails for unwanted content, any that have this may be blocked*

5. **mserspam** ⬜ - *people who send unwanted emails to many addresses at the same time*

B: Discussion

Work in small groups and answer the following questions.

1. Why is **spam** a problem for email users?
2. How can email users protect themselves from this problem?
3. Should email users look at every email they receive? Why or why not?
4. Why is spam a serious problem for businesses?

Reading Activities

A: Understanding the Main Idea

Read **Part One** of the article and answer these questions to help you understand the main idea of the article.

1. What are makers of Internet security products starting to take more notice of?
2. Are consumers able to fight spam now?
3. Does Church think people are using the new tools?
4. Give examples of companies who are now making anti-spam products.

Part One

Fighting Spam Becoming Business Amid Email Glut

BY ANDREA ORR

PALO ALTO, Calif. Sun Oct 13 (Reuters) - They haven't always been on top of the problem. But, as the volume of e-mail spam hits **epidemic proportions**, the makers of Internet security products are starting to take more notice.

And consumers, having long **bemoaned** the lack of recourse to the mass mailings finally have some tools at their disposal that may at least **ease** the problem -- even if they can't nip it altogether.

"There are solutions out there that are helping people and I don't think they know about them yet," said Ray Everett Church, chief privacy officer of EPrivacy Group, and co-author of the book "Internet Privacy for Dummies." "As a result, they are now spending two or three more times hitting the delete key than they did a year ago," he said.

Along with a multitude of small companies making products specifically designed to fight spam, larger software companies such as McAfee and Symantec have started to weigh in. (Continued/...)

*Glossary: **epidemic** - rapidly increasing **proportions** - the size of something **bemoaned** - complained or said how disappointed you are about something **ease** - to help make something less of a problem*

B: Find a Word

Read each definition below and then find the words in **Part Two** of the article that match them.

1. Find a word that means *to recognize the difference between two things.*
2. Find a word that means *something that is developing gradually.*
3. Find a word that means *achieved.*
4. Find a word that means *to get something, especially money, from someone illegally and by lying to them.*
5. Find a word that means *a force that encourages a process to happen more quickly.*

Part Two

(.../Continued) Earlier this year, McAfee acquired SpamKiller from a Norwegian software maker, and incorporated it into its suite of security products. Like many of the newer spam filters coming onto the market, the McAfee solution goes beyond simply blocking suspicious keywords. It attempts to look at the overall context of the message, so it can, for example, distinguish between a recipe, a health-care site and a **porn** message.

"It was back in January, when we were having some planning meetings, that we decided the anti-spam market was something that was going to explode," said Bryson Gordon, product line manager for McAfee. "... Spam is evolving from being a mere nuisance to being a security threat."

AVOIDING FALSE POSITIVES

A growing number of the more than 500,000 identity and credit card thefts that occur online each year, are being accomplished through spam, experts say.

The typical method is to send an unsuspecting customer an offer for a product and instruct them to click onto a link contained in the mailing. That lands them on another site where they are asked to enter personal information such as name, address and credit card number.

"Prior to the spam epidemic, people would have to rummage through your garbage to get this information," said Gordon. "Now they are simply sending out 30 million emails in an attempt to defraud." He said when McAfee did some market research earlier this year to determine where to focus its new product development, the No. 1 request from customers was for an anti-spam tool.

For Symantec, an impetus for entering the anti-spam market was the **glut** of mailings received by its own staffers.

Anson Lee, product manager for Norton Internet Security, said that without filtering, spam accounts for about 80 percent of all the email he receives. (Continued/...)

Glossary: porn - *the presentation of naked people or sexual acts etc* **glut** - *a situation in which there is more of something than is needed*

C: Choose the Best Answer

Read **Part Two** again and then choose the best answer to fill the gaps in these statements.

1. Large software company, McAfee, has bought an anti-spam product that _____.
   a. *can read every email carefully and decide whether or not it should be blocked.*
   b. *scans for keywords to find messages that may be offensive.*
   c. *can tell the difference between different kinds of email messages.*

2. _____ on-line ID and credit card thefts are being carried out through spam each year.
   a. *All of the*
   b. *A few of the*
   c. *An increasing number of*

3. McAfee knows that spam is of great concern to its customers because _____.
   a. *of the glut of mailings received by its own staff.*
   b. *it has discovered that 30 million emails are sent out to customers every year.*
   c. *of the market research it did earlier in the year.*

4. Without using a filter _____ of the emails that Anson Lee receives are not spam.
   a. *a quarter*
   b. *a fifth*
   c. *a third*

D: True or False

Read **Part Three** of the article and decide whether these statements are true [T] or false [F].

1. McAfee's SpamKiller and Symantec's Norton Internet Security 2003 perform similar functions.
2. Spammers are continually changing the messages they send to avoid anti-spam blocks.
3. To avoid detection spammers may, for example, regularly change content.
4. Church thinks that the introduction of anti-spam software may not completely solve the spam problem.
5. Lee compares the spammers to cats and users of email to mice.

Part Three

(.../Continued) Symantec's new security software -- Norton Internet Security 2003, hitting store shelves this month -- includes a feature called Norton Spam Alert. Like the McAfee product, it promises to consider the overall context of the message rather than only scanning for certain keywords.

Getting the upper hand over spammers, Lee said, has become something of a cat-and-mouse game, in which spammers routinely change content in order to **circumvent** filters. Many have become adept at disguising their mailings with legitimate messages in the header field, or even by formatting the entire message to look like a subscription-based newsletter.

Church, of the EPrivacy Group, said that some of the newer anti-spam software products appear to be winning the race against the spammers, at least for now.

Still, he said that **ridding** the entire Internet of spam may ultimately take more than technology.

"At the end of the day, it is going to be more than just a technical fix. You've got to stop spammers at the source and that is going to require policy changes and new laws."

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Glossary: ***circumvent*** - *to find a way of avoiding something* ***ridding*** - *becoming free of something that causes annoyance or trouble*

E: Fill the Gaps

Read the whole article again and use information from it to complete the gaps in this summary of the article. (Each gap may have one to three words.)

Makers of Internet security products are beginning to take seriously the increase in **1.**_____. *As a result, anti-spam products are now appearing on the market. One expert, Ray Everett Church, believes that* **2.**_____ *are not aware that* **3.**_____ *are available. Two of the larger companies are offering anti-spam products that try to look at the overall* **4.**_____ *of email messages and distinguish between different kinds.*

There is steady growth in the number of on-line **5.**_____ *and ID card frauds accomplished through spam. Email users are sent messages offering them a* **6.**_____ *and asking them to click on a* **7.**_____ *which then takes them to another site where they are then asked for personal details such as their* **8.**_____.

9._____ *are continually changing the kinds of emails they send to try to avoid detection by* **10.**_____. *Church believes that while the new anti-spam products will help, anti-spam legislation will also be needed to win the battle against this serious problem.*

Post-Reading Activities

You may do one or more of these.

A: Discussion

Answer these questions in pairs.

1. Do you ever get advertising material and offers in your mailbox that you do not want?
2. Would you like a service that filters these items?
3. Do you ever receive sales phone calls that you haven't requested? If yes, how do you deal with them?
4. Do you feel it is your right to phone or email anyone you want to?
5. If spam becomes illegal, how could new Internet businesses let people know about their new products?

B: Dialogue

Work in pairs and complete the gaps in this dialogue with your own ideas. When you have finished, read aloud your version of the dialogue. One of you is **A**, the other **B**.

A is a sales representative for a carpet cleaning company and has phoned B's home to advertise his company's latest special carpet cleaning offer.

B is a business woman who has just arrived home from work.

> **B:** Hello?
>
> **A:** Is that Mrs E. Patterson?
>
> **B:** Yes it is.
>
> **A:** Mrs Patterson, I'm Craig from Busy Bee Carpet Care and I'd like to take just a few moments of your time to tell you about _____.
>
> **B:** Well, thank-you but I'm not sure...
>
> **A:** It's such an exciting offer because _____, we'll do two rooms for free which is a huge saving.
>
> **B:** Yes, but...
>
> **A:** The special is on only until _____.
>
> **B:** No, thank you, I'm not interested and I'm trying to fix dinner.
>
> **A:** Would you like me to send _____?
>
> **B:** No, thank you.
>
> **A:** But if _____, your name will go in the draw to win _____...
>
> **B:** No, really, thank-you very much. Good-bye.
>
> **A:** Oh, _____.

C: Give Your Opinion

Work in small groups and answer this question:

> The woman in the dialogue in **Post-Reading B** was very polite to the sales representative who had called her at home. Do you think she should have handled the conversation differently? If yes, what should she have said? If no, what did you like about what she said? How would you have handled the call?

TEACHERS' NOTES AND ANSWER KEY

Pre-Reading Activities

A: Vocabulary - Notes

If you suspect that students will find this quite difficult, you can make it easier by: 1. giving them the first letter of each word, or 2. getting them to work in pairs to complete the words.

(The meaning of the word 'spam' has changed somewhat over the last few years. It has previously been defined as the practice of sending undesirable emails in large numbers to newsgroups but has now been extended to include unwanted emails sent to personal email accounts etc. Examples of spam may include messages containing offers for products, ads for porn sites, competitions etc, all of which have not been asked for by the receiver.)

A: Vocabulary - Answers

1. spam, 2. email, 3. software, 4. filtering, 5. spammers.

B: Discussion - Notes

If you have students in your class who have not used email, try to group them with others who have. If none of your students have used email, you could have a short class discussion on the questions.

Reading Activities

A: Understanding the Main Idea - Answers

1. The huge growth in email spam.
2. Yes, there are solutions available.
3. No, he doesn't.
4. McAfee and Symantec.

B: Find a Word - Answers

1. distinguish, 2. evolving, 3. accomplished, 4. defraud, 5. impetus.

C: Choose the Best Answer - Answers

1. c, 2. c, 3. c, 4. b.

D: True, False or Not Given

1. **T**, 2. **T**, 3. **T**, 4. **T**, 5. **F** (The companies producing anti-spam software are the cats and the spammers are the mice.).

E: Fill the Gaps - Suggested Answers

Makers of Internet security products are beginning to take seriously the increase in **1. email spam**. As a result, anti-spam products are now appearing on the market. One expert, Ray Everett Church, believes that **2. consumers** are not aware that **3. solutions** are available. Two of the larger companies are offering anti-spam products that try to look at the overall **4. context** of email messages and distinguish between different kinds.

There is steady growth in the number of on-line **5. credit** and ID card frauds accomplished through spam. Email users are sent messages offering them a **6. product** and asking them to click on a **7. link** which then takes them to another site where they are then asked for personal details such as their **8. credit card number**.

9. Spammers are continually changing the kinds of emails they send to try to avoid detection by **10. filters**. Church believes that while the new anti-spam products will help, anti-spam legislation will also be needed to win the battle against this serious problem.

Post-Reading Activities

B: Dialogue - Notes

Students can also make up their own dialogues on related situations.

B: Dialogue - Sample Answer

B: Hello?

A: Is that Mrs E. Patterson?

B: Yes it is.

A: Mrs Patterson, I'm Craig from Busy Bee Carpet Care and I'd like to take just a few moments of your time to tell you about the fantastic special we have at present.

B: Well, thank-you but I'm not sure...

A: It's such an exciting offer because if you get your carpets cleaned this month, we'll do two rooms for free which is a huge saving.

B: Yes, but...

A: The special is on only until the end of the month.

B: No, thank you, I'm not interested and I'm trying to fix dinner.

A: Would you like me to send you some information?

B: No, thank you.

A: But if I send it to you, your name will go in the draw to win a wonderful holiday in Miami and...

B: No, really, thank-you very much. Good-bye.

A: Oh goodbye.