



## SUMMER 2003 NEWSLETTER

### **KWOM NEWS**

**SPAM SPAM SPAM** – Spam has been in the news a lot lately. Politicians are trying to regulate it. The “Buffalo spammer” was sued and arrested. AOL and MSN are trying to create a list of people allowed to send email to their customers, which sounds like a way for them to collect more money. In fact, unsolicited bulk email or “spam” has been out of control for years – the volume doubles about every 6 months. Someone must buy herbal Viagra and inkjet refills, or the spammers would give up.

Unfortunately, most of the spam comes from fake email addresses and is relayed through computers and ISPs in Asia or South America. The only way to trace the spammers is through the websites they direct you to, and most of those are outside the US as well. Proposed legislation may actually increase the amount of spam, by making spam clearly legal if it contains an identifying code like “ADV” or “XXX”.

What is KWOM doing about spam? First, we never send you junk mail, and we never share or sell your email address. Sometimes we get calls from customers thinking we have sent them spam or sold their address, because they see several other KWOM addresses in the recipient list. The reason is that some bulk emailing software saves time by sorting all the spam it is going to send by domain name, then sending one email to several recipients at that domain. In many cases you will notice that all the recipients are together in the alphabet, because the spammer used an alphabetized list.

Sometimes people think they are getting spam that is not addressed to them. This happens when the spammer lists you on the bcc: line rather than the To: line. Another trick we are seeing lately is to fake the From: address using someone’s real address. This causes all the bounce messages to flood that person’s mailbox, while recipients think that person is spamming them. We recently got a bunch of bounce messages to dns@kwom.com which is the contact address we use when registering domain names. Clearly some spammer pulled this from public records and faked it as the From: address.

We use a variety of services from Postini to protect against spam. All incoming email is routed through Postini, and we use them to protect against “directory harvest” attacks. If one IP address starts sending many emails to us, and most of them are to invalid addresses, that IP address is temporarily blocked. This prevents spammers from compiling a list of valid email addresses by trying asmith@kwom.com, bsmith@kwom.com, csmith@kwom.com, etc., and seeing which ones are bounced.

When we started routing mail through Postini, we found that about 20% of the mail was coming direct to our mailserver and bypassing Postini, even though we nowhere listed mail.kwom.com as receiving mail for our domain. All of that turned out to be spam, since no legitimate email would go to the wrong server. We now allow incoming mail only from our customers and from Postini, so the spam sent to mail.kwom.com is rejected. We also block email from a small number of identifiable bulk emailers like etracks.com and mb00.net who are in the business of sending spam for other companies.

We also have a premium service from Postini that will filter spam and viruses from your individual email account for \$1 additional per month. The filter sensitivity can be set from 1 (lenient) to 5 (aggressive) on each category: bulk mail, adult content, racially insensitive, special offers, and get-rich-quick. Blocked mail is quarantined for 2 weeks and can be viewed if desired at a password-protected website.

What can you do about spam? Try not to pick an email address like jsmith@kwom.com that is easily guessed. Be careful about using your email address to buy or register products online – many of these companies sell their lists. If you must use your email address, look for checkboxes to opt out of receiving junk mail, or consider getting a second “throwaway” email address or alias to use for this purpose. If you do receive spam, don’t follow unsubscribe instructions. Usually the unsubscribe feature is phony, at worst it will identify you as a real live person and you will get even more spam. If you put your email address on your website, have your web designer encode it using HTML codes like “&#097;” which will hide it from email address harvesting software (see [www.wbwip.com/wbw/emailencoder](http://www.wbwip.com/wbw/emailencoder)).

If you are getting no more than 5–10 junkmails per day, count yourself among the lucky and just delete them. If someone who has your email address sells their list to a producer of spamming kits, the amount of spam can skyrocket. Some people get over 200 per day. If the spam becomes a burden, we can

change your email address, as long as you don't have to change business cards or letterhead, and you don't have to notify a lot of people. Otherwise, we recommend the Postini filtering service, which typically blocks around 90% of the spam. All you have to do is call or email us to have it enabled on your account.

**INTERNET ACCESS WHILE TRAVELING** – KWOM has local access numbers covering the entire Chicago metro area. If you are traveling and can use a computer with Internet access, check your KWOM email on the Web using the WebMail link at [www.kwom.com](http://www.kwom.com). We have other options including national dialup numbers and a toll-free number, call for details.

### **TIPS FROM TECH SUPPORT**

**AUTOMATIC DISCONNECT** – Some people want their computer to disconnect them from the Internet automatically, others don't. The available automatic disconnect features depend on your operating system and email software. In Windows, go to Internet Options, either from Control Panel or from the Tools menu in Internet Explorer. Select the Connections tab, click on your KWOM connection once to highlight it, click on the Settings button, then click on the Advanced button. You will now have two check boxes, one to Disconnect if idle for x minutes, and another to Disconnect when connection may no longer be needed. In Mac OS8 or OS9, go to the Apple menu, select Control Panels, then Remote Access. Click on the Options button and then select the Connection tab. You will now have two check boxes, one to Prompt every x minutes to maintain connection (most people find this annoying), and another to Disconnect if idle for x minutes. If you use Outlook Express and you are being disconnected immediately after checking for new mail, go to the Tools menu, select Options, then select the Connection tab and uncheck Hang up after sending and receiving.

**VANISHING EMAIL** – Do some of your email messages seem to vanish after you download them, even though you haven't deleted them? You may have your email software set to only display certain messages in the message list. In Netscape Communicator, go to the View menu, and in the Messages sub-menu make sure that "All" is checked. If "Unread" is checked, any messages you have already read will not be listed. In Outlook Express, go to the View menu, and in the Current View sub-menu make sure that "Show All Messages" is checked.

**DISABLE EMAIL AUTO-PREVIEW** – By default, most email programs automatically display the highlighted message in a "preview" window. This is convenient, but has drawbacks. If the message links to a webpage, your computer will automatically download items from that webpage, using Internet connection bandwidth and possibly telling the sender that you have viewed the message. If the message contains a virus, your computer can become infected by previewing it. And a "killer email" may crash your email software before you have a chance to delete it. In Netscape Communicator, go to the View menu, and in the Show sub-menu, uncheck "Message". In Outlook Express, go to the View menu, click on Layout, and then uncheck "Show preview pane". Once the auto-preview feature is disabled, you should be able to safely highlight and delete killer emails. Viruses and weblinks won't be activated unless you double-click on the message to intentionally open it.

**POP LOCK BUSY** – If you disconnect from the Internet before your email software finishes downloading all the mail, you may be locked out of your mailbox for about 10 minutes until the mailserver realizes you went away. The symptoms can be a message like "pop lock busy – is another session active?" or getting prompted for your email password even though it is saved correctly on your computer. Wait until the mailbox lock expires and try again. Often the problem is caused by a large (several megabyte) email message. If you don't realize the message is still downloading, and you disconnect from the Internet, the problem will occur. Or if the message causes your email or anti-virus software to freeze, the problem may occur. Note that when the lock expires and you try again, all the messages will start downloading again from number 1, since your computer never told the mailserver it got them. In Outlook Express you can click on Send/Rcv and then Stop, which will cause Outlook Express to finish the current message and then disconnect gracefully from the mailserver. If someone has sent you a huge email and you just want to delete it, call us, or log in to WebMail from [www.kwom.com](http://www.kwom.com) and delete the message via WebMail.

**WHAT MODEM TO BUY** – Many problems with unreliable or slow connections can be solved by replacing your modem. The problem is usually the firmware or driver rather than bad hardware, but replacing the whole modem is the best solution. Our favorite modem (Diamond Supramax) has recently become unavailable. We are evaluating Zoom models 3025 (internal PCI) and 2985/2986 (external USB) as the most similar replacements.