

Death2Spam.

CASE STUDY | Client: Toastmasters | Contact: Dale Hartle

FROM DELUGE TO DROUGHT.

An overnight spam management success story.

“We needed a whole-of-organisation solution and one that didn’t require any input, management or maintenance from our users. That’s what made Death2Spam perfect.”

– Dale Hartle, DTM, webmaster, Toastmasters New Zealand

They say a squeaky wheel is oiled first. But what happens when every wheel squeaks? The combined racket tends to be dismissed as background noise and ignored. Perhaps this is why spam continues its rampage. What started as a squeak is now a roar so deafening that many computer users have grown accustomed to the cacophony of spam, accepting it as an inescapable 21st Century scourge on email usage.

But talk to Toastmasters New Zealand webmaster Dale Hartle and she’ll tell you suffering spam is optional, and just because spam is ubiquitous that is no reason to keep tolerating it. In just five months of using Death2Spam, Hartle can see that over half a million emails to Toastmasters have so far been filtered out as spam, accounting for 98% of the organisation’s total email. But what surprised her most – even more than the precision of Death2Spam filtering – was that the cure to her spam problems happened overnight.



Dale Hartle - DTM, webmaster
Toastmasters New Zealand

Suffering in Silence

A large non-profit organisation with 220 clubs and 700 email accounts, Toastmasters is well known in New Zealand. Its website attracts annually over 150,000 visitors, who are able to obtain certain contact information, including email addresses, perhaps making the organisation a great target for spammers.

What webmaster Dale Hartle didn't know was the scale of spam infiltration, which many organisation members suffered in silence for years. However, there were a few indicators that made her suspicious.

Some clubs wanted to be removed from Toastmasters' mailing lists; and increasingly individuals required help with viruses and spam prevention, which club officers attributed to Toastmasters' domain email. The situation encouraged

some members to consider changing email addresses and opting out of the organisation's emailed communications.

Dale knew the problem was worsening and wanted a quick fix, though one with enterprise-level performance. And given the disaggregate club structure, she knew Toastmasters required a "whole-of-organisation" spam filtering solution. "One that didn't require any input, management or maintenance from any of the organisation's users," Dale said. "We had to take the lead – we couldn't rely on individuals to provide their own solution."

What Dale found shocking was that over 98% of her organisation's email was spam.

Overnight Cure

A District Officer in Toastmasters recommended Death2Spam and Dale signed up the organisation to a trial, simply by changing the Toastmasters MX record (an entry in a DNS table zone controlling where email is sent for a particular domain name) to route emails through the Death2Spam filters. "I was shocked by the results," Dale said. "Within minutes, I could see what was going on. I had no idea of the scale of the problem."

What Dale found shocking was that over 98% of her organisation's email was spam – a deluge that until

Death2Spam filtering was switched on individual users and webmaster Dale were forced to deal with. Thanks to Death2Spam, Toastmasters' spam deluge was reduced to a drought literally overnight. The system's precision,

which consistently maintains spam filtering accuracy above 99.7% and a false positive rate below 0.02%, and a web interface to monitor email activity and reclassify emails on the rare occasions it is required, stood out.

"Death2Spam is extremely simple to use and requires very little maintenance," Dale said. "Most people are unsure about dealing with spam – often they don't have their home computers adequately protected or aren't sufficiently IT literate to deal with the problem. Death2Spam was a whole-of-organisation approach to filtering, which made it perfect. "I am ecstatic about it and so is the executive because they didn't have to do anything other than approve it," Dale said.

BIG WINS

Whole-of-organisation spam cure

- Using the Death2Spam managed service, Toastmasters benefits from a centrally-administered but remotely-hosted spam filtering service. Individual users aren't burdened with mandatory tinkering, which Dale said made Death2Spam perfect for the organisation. "We had to take the lead – we couldn't rely on individuals to provide their own solution," Dale said.

Restoring confidence in email

- Dale has been released from an overload of calls for help. System users, too, have had their confidence in email communications restored, typified by the following feedback. "I am pleased to inform you of the almost total elimination of spam. I must look at what you have done for our business, as spam is driving us spare." Toastmasters District Governor, reporting back to Dale Hartle

Zero footprint

- Toastmasters chose the Death2Spam managed service over a site installation. So rather than deploying and maintaining more infrastructure, a simple redirection of its MX record to the Death2Spam server-hive filters all incoming email. Dale is able to securely check and maintain filtering preferences and results online. "I didn't want to introduce new technology into the environment. I wanted total control," Dale said.

Highest Precision

- Death2Spam keeps winning the war on spam because it keeps learning. Using technology including an AI layer called word-frequency-distribution analysis, which compares patterns of words in incoming mail against a vast database of 'good', 'spam' and 'virus' emails, and inbuilt self-awareness that picks up on how other users deal with messages, Death2Spam maintains greater than 99% precision. "The spam in Toastmasters emails has ceased, which is really great. Tell me, where did you get Death2Spam? I think I need it for myself now." President, Gore Toastmasters, reporting back to Dale Hartle.