

# Spam Suspicions Greater Than Realities

By Rob McGann

Approximately 87 percent of Web users believe they've received spam as a result of subscribing to an e-mail newsletter, according to a survey conducted by [ReleMail](#), an e-mail monitoring and certification service. The survey polled 1,000 Internet users who described themselves as subscribing to at least on e-mail newsletter.

"The main point is that customers don't trust the online privacy policies of e-mail newsletter companies," said Michael Adams, founder and chief executive of the Tucson, Arizona-based company. "Most Internet users believe these policies are routinely violated. However, research we did contradicted that assumption."

Of the 1000 newsletter publishers profiled by ReleMail in an separate study, ReleMail found that 99.7 percent did not send spam to the e-mail addresses of their subscribers. Adams classified that apparent gap between the suspected prevalence of newsletter spamming and actual cases of impropriety as "a huge distortion."

That said, skepticism appears to be widespread enough to prevent a majority of people from subscribing even to newsletters in which they may otherwise be interested. The latest survey found that 83 percent of the Internet user public has avoided subscribing to newsletters of interest because they weren't sure they could trust the online publisher. Additionally, 80 percent said they had tried to unsubscribe from an e-mail newsletter, only to find the request was either disregarded or did not go through.

EMAIL PRIVACY STATISTICS
• 96% say email privacy is important to them
• 87% believe they have received spam from a company that collected, then sold their email address
• 83% have avoided subscribing to email newsletters because they weren't sure they could trust publisher
• 80% have tried to unsubscribe from an email newsletter, and found unsubscribe did not work
• 78% do not always believe company email privacy statements
• 66% believe that, given an opportunity, most businesses would take advantage of public if they thought they would not be discovered
Source: ReleMail LLC

As a solution to the problem, ReleMail suggests a five point "action plan" for companies to build trust with potential Internet subscribers:

first, appoint a third-party organization to certify the company's privacy policies; second, articulate a clear privacy pledge that can be easily accessed online; third, get a third-party to certify your e-mail subscriber program; fourth, gain a single view of customers; and lastly, implement technology that allows customers to control the dialogue.

Finally, the report found that 72 percent of Internet users said they would be more likely to subscribe to an e-mail newsletter if had been independently certified as trustworthy.

"These data point out that people are increasingly skeptical of self-published e-mail privacy policies, but they do pay attention to independent certification of e-mail practices," Adams said.