# Guide to Computer Forensics and Investigations Sixth Edition

Chapter 11

E-mail and Social Media Investigations





## Objectives

- Explain the role of e-mail in investigations
- Describe client and server roles in e-mail
- Describe tasks in investigating e-mail crimes and violations
- Explain the use of e-mail server logs
- Describe some specialized e-mail forensics tools
- Explain how to apply digital forensics methods to investigating social media communications



## Exploring the Role of E-mail in Investigations (1 of 2)

- An increase in e-mail scams and fraud attempts with phishing or spoofing
  - Investigators need to know how to examine and interpret the unique content of e-mail messages
- Phishing e-mails contain links to text on a Web page
  - Attempts to get personal information from reader
- Pharming DNS poisoning takes user to a fake site
- A noteworthy e-mail scam was 419, or the Nigerian Scam



## Exploring the Role of E-mail in Investigations (2 of 2)

- Spoofing e-mail can be used to commit fraud
- Investigators can use the Enhanced/Extended Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (ESMTP) number in the message's header to check for legitimacy of email



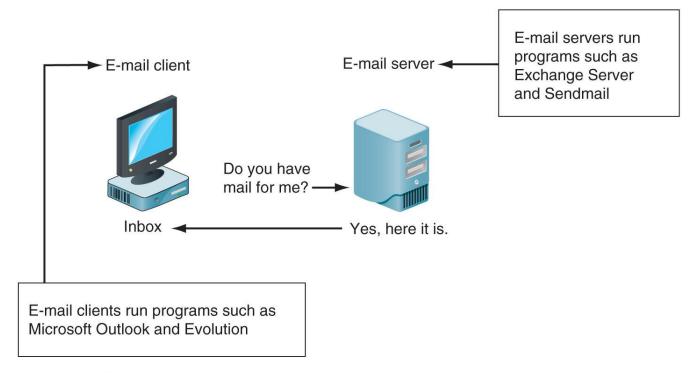
## Exploring the Roles of the Client and Server in E-mail (1 of 3)

- E-mail can be sent and received in two environments
  - Internet
  - Intranet (an internal network)
- Client/server architecture
  - Server OS and e-mail software differs from those on the client side
- Protected accounts
  - Require usernames and passwords





## Exploring the Roles of the Client and Server in E-mail (2 of 3)



**Figure 11-1** E-mail in a client/server architecture



## Exploring the Roles of the Client and Server in E-mail (3 of 3)

- Name conventions
  - Corporate: john.smith@somecompany.com
  - Public: whatever@gmail.com
  - Everything after @ belongs to the domain name
- Tracing corporate e-mails is easier
  - Because accounts use standard names the administrator establishes
- Many companies are migrating their e-mail services to the cloud



## Investigating E-mail Crimes and Violations (1 of 2)

- Similar to other types of investigations
- Goals
  - Find who is behind the crime
  - Collect the evidence
  - Present your findings
  - Build a case
- Know the applicable privacy laws for your jurisdiction
  - Electronic Communications Privacy Act (ECPA) and the Stored Communications Act (SCA) apply to e-mail.



## Investigating E-mail Crimes and Violations (2 of 2)

- E-mail crimes depend on the city, state, or country
  - Example: spam may not be a crime in some states
  - Always consult with an attorney
- Examples of crimes involving e-mails
  - Narcotics trafficking
  - Extortion
  - Sexual harassment and stalking
  - Fraud
  - Child abductions and pornography
  - Terrorism





## Understanding Forensic Linguistics

- Forensic Linguistics
  - Where language and law intersect
- Four categories:
  - Language and law
  - Language in the legal process
  - Language as evidence
  - Research/teaching
- Encompasses civil cases, criminal cases, cyberterrorism cases, and other legal proceedings





## Examining E-mail Messages (1 of 2)

- Access victim's computer or mobile device to recover the evidence
- Using the victim's e-mail client
  - Find and copy any potential evidence
  - Access protected or encrypted material
  - Print e-mails
- Guide victim on the phone
  - Open and copy e-mail including headers
- You may have to recover deleted e-mails





## Examining E-mail Messages (2 of 2)

- Copying an e-mail message
  - Before you start an e-mail investigation
    - You need to copy and print the e-mail involved in the crime or policy violation
  - You might also want to forward the message as an attachment to another e-mail address
- With many GUI e-mail programs, you can copy an e-mail by dragging it to a storage medium
  - Or by saving it in a different location





### Viewing E-mail Headers (1 of 5)

- Investigators should learn how to find e-mail headers
  - GUI clients
  - Web-based clients
- After you open e-mail headers, copy and paste them into a text document
  - So that you can read them with a text editor
- Become familiar with as many e-mail programs as possible
  - Often more than one e-mail program is installed





## Viewing E-mail Headers (2 of 5)

- Outlook
  - Double-click the message and then click File, Properties
  - Copy headers
  - Paste them to any text editor
  - Save the document as Outlook header.txt in your work folder





### Viewing E-mail Headers (3 of 5)

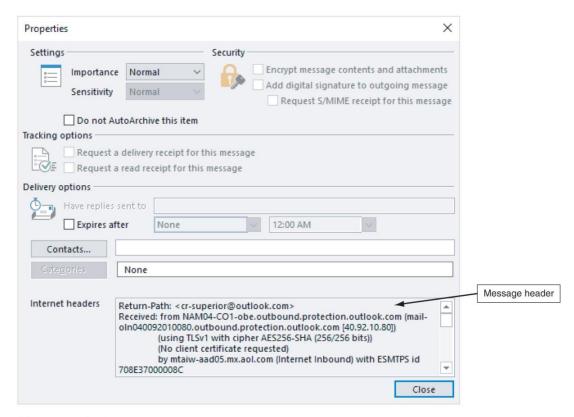


Figure 11-2 An Outlook e-mail header





### Viewing E-mail Headers (4 of 5)

#### Gmail

- Click the down arrow next to the Reply circular arrow, and click Show original
- Click the **Download Original** link to open the "Opening original\_msg.txt" dialog box
- Click Open with Notepad (default) and click Okay
- Save the file in your work folder with the default name

#### Yahoo

- Click Inbox to view a list of messages
- Above the message window, click More and click View Raw Message
- Copy and paste headers to a text file





### Viewing E-mail Headers (5 of 5)

```
X-Apparently-To:
                                       Mon, 11 Sep 2017 17:24:24 +0000
Return-Path: <LCwMzCwMbLSsHJzsbCwM7LRGtMzsTOxMrKws@smtp-coi-g09-025.aweber.com>
Received-SPF: pass (domain of smtp-coi-g09-025.aweber.com designates 204.194.223.25 as permitted sender)
X-YMailISG: MiNgrvsWLDsdwYue2y 8jUSdL18maR6 T.d55zY7e6G0ngyy
ssZsOTvSJvYtoV105Mj28Ri1jcZ1Aw3GVLNXUMXr9R4mw0WKWp18u1Cc3mgR
XaY8x1W9Cv9V5LTzBHu4Z8VZD12Q tfXDLaucahaQTQMCaoSfdAgb9r9D61n
pTnjrzwvquf7DZueBuiKzy9nJ6Val4VRv70iEdIZjiyIQlICm0hA7992w0Tw
XQ7t3QR.x dTIwWfCEwkIOrUhcem6QPn83fKKJ9bdOBhnDx vlkW5c8Wry4D
glMLouiMPg 30L9ww.lfzRXCQt1pwwzWl XTMQh7Pl0VT6Xn2kpZ1vVjgcfi
7HcVAAyrqxEzdhJKXmqrmACBOBUFvSh1PM9LUHi2Gb.b9zNWs4APLc7IIY t
 .g vQieX4 pYdvSsCAmsSJ.nmvlATRnUkpXzw.Jm4GHsnv2KWpReWKcS YDu
hC HASKpnxcx81.JEDM0KkhPTA1bjv3 DlItXp8GDScFyv9Rz3ETEeLgKDH8
 6Iantvm8.E zBNCZo2UuxAUmgxpnYgZgpiMCb6.YgOJ78tf 0cGmt8BDIo20
 fWrUTx.0tAhlh8DQz1NHG3120FM9ju3c9KtuPTafQKCZXqznPDAui uBlRwg
fi9JboFzFFqdzunZkKrBCMevBKnp85Z1ZahJkQYragNq6es436v36ED1k3x
VjqwlLwYM0HuIFpg7z8R.w.Z0gi7Bi8m.WQyTP8dcAOvI6n4Fw5R4E.ILdaC
KofwXtj7CpBq1COw3r6PVyDYEygH6Z 83he7qG6p4H4cv7zHR6mdiygIg1Ku
caS2UytV9MD16I fMx6auvqi6UhgrQTvG4i7K6V.kbTQEBqDDfbmt3J0pD7W
ElUcHFlhzf0lhRkRuXuEpIOu..NYvRRkkU2mnFPAxDh9eqUlpsXyv9plyqP9
 ZpRpE6siCkiUcesmJAUNK0RhEwzAmoNwNmkqH60.o1vwOc3pA 2Y1KNbDeXS
 eUQ5JU5hRpaPMn2CqMyyHdj9WSyaxSRSCnJMPKrq4J68h3esSW9y8jH hBFS
aZ13BFq1fVEc9 5 P9 UqM3LMJY6YvH4126IAQqRz3KSKHkYmWmXJMnOXxOe
Oz0oBf6D4jfvkVTDTcVeRPeEaDrEQuCTrQffMd61Ztgx25AgzzJufor61ogC
 .ee.pCy.La7YDn9UpHKnIt6iz yD9Wtwop6gKy96bxiWdTx8v9Waa0GWLJ1y
JwYhK6BSd95iH2cgiVUV7fQYhXvoUypBca.Ar4sq2yoEhXzy3Sqm90jXKh P
94nzt57KAZYvK.GHpkwHMoaHj1YCdeq1d3k61neDbhiGjJDjzwTRK4FN3krv
VYQDwVVBx8wjG8qDA7skIT99.tCBu8DR57kC.NtOig--
X-Originating-IP: [204.194.223.25]
Authentication-Results: mta1120.mail.bf1.yahoo.com from=send.aweber.com; domainkeys=neutral (no sig);
Received: from 127.0.0.1 (EHLO smtp-coi-g09-025.aweber.com) (204.194.223.25)
 by mta1120.mail.bf1.yahoo.com with SMTPS; Mon, 11 Sep 2017 17:24:24 +0000
DKIM-Signature: v=1; a=rsa-sha256; c=relaxed/relaxed; d=aweber.com;
       s=dkim s1024; t=1505149312;
        bh=6z2+thX7FOfo+chNPIhWc5SoNUcWciEf11WBF9GXfBs=;
        h-MIME waveign . Content time . To . From . Conday . Date . Tiet I I manhagriba
```

#### Figure 11-3 Viewing headers in Yahoo!

Source: Yahoo! Inc., www.yahoo.com





## Examining E-mail Headers (1 of 2)

- Headers contain useful information
  - The main piece of information you're looking for is the originating e-mail's IP address
  - Date and time the message was sent
  - Filenames of any attachments
  - Unique message number (if supplied)





### Examining E-mail Headers (2 of 2)

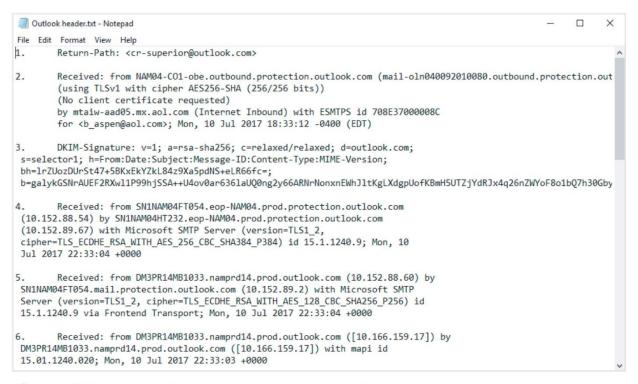


Figure 11-4 An e-mail header with line numbers added





### Examining Additional E-mail Files

- E-mail messages are saved on the client side or left at the server
- Microsoft Outlook uses .pst and .ost files
- Most e-mail programs also include an electronic address book, calendar, task list, and memos
- In Web-based e-mail
  - Messages are displayed and saved as Web pages in the browser's cache folders
  - Many Web-based e-mail providers also offer instant messaging (IM) services





## Tracing an E-mail Message

- Determining message origin is referred to as "tracing"
- Contact the administrator responsible for the sending server
- Use a registry site to find point of contact:
  - www.arin.net
  - www.internic.com
  - www.google.com
- Verify your findings by checking network e-mail logs against e-mail addresses





## Using Network E-mail Logs (1 of 2)

- Router logs
  - Record all incoming and outgoing traffic
  - Have rules to allow or disallow traffic
  - You can resolve the path a transmitted e-mail has taken
- Firewall logs
  - Filter e-mail traffic
  - Verify whether the e-mail passed through
- You can use any text editor or specialized tools





## Using Network E-mail Logs (2 of 2)

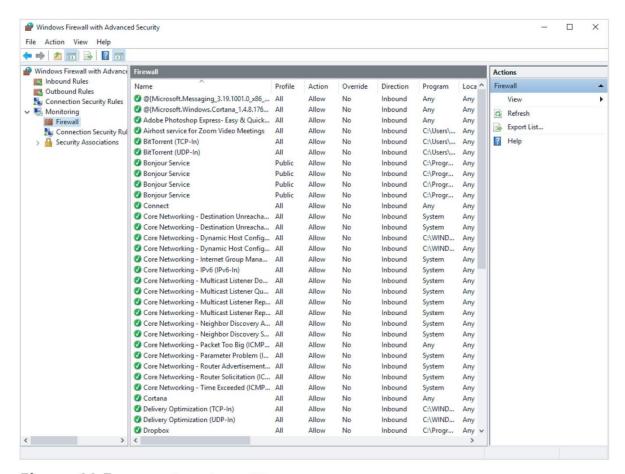


Figure 11-5 A Windows firewall log





## Understanding E-mail Servers (1 of 2)

- An e-mail server is loaded with software that uses e-mail protocols for its services
  - And maintains logs you can examine and use in your investigation
- E-mail storage
  - Database
  - Flat file system
- Logs
  - Some servers are set up to log e-mail transactions by default; others have to be configured to do so





## Understanding E-mail Servers (2 of 2)

- E-mail logs generally identify the following:
  - E-mail messages an account received
  - Sending IP address
  - Receiving and reading date and time
  - E-mail content
  - System-specific information
- Contact suspect's network e-mail administrator as soon as possible
- Servers can recover deleted e-mails
  - Similar to deletion of files on a hard drive





## Examining UNIX E-mail Server Logs (1 of 2)

- Common UNIX e-mail servers: Postfix and Sendmail
- /etc/sendmail.cf
  - Configuration file for Sendmail
- /etc/syslog.conf
  - Specifies how and which events Sendmail logs
- Postfix has two configuration files
  - master. cf and main.cf (found in /etc/postfix)





## Examining UNIX E-mail Server Logs (2 of 2)

- /var/log/maillog
  - Records SMTP, POP3, and IMAP4 communications
    - Contains an IP address and time stamp that you can compare with the e-mail the victim received
- Default location for storing log files:
  - /var/log
  - An administrator can change the log location
  - Use the find or locate command to find them
- Check UNIX man pages for more information



- Microsoft Exchange Server (Exchange)
  - Uses a database
  - Based on Microsoft Extensible Storage Engine (ESE)
- Most useful files in an investigation:
  - .edb database files, checkpoint files, and temporary files
- Information Store files
  - Database files \*.edb
    - Responsible for **MAPI** information



- Transaction logs
  - Keep track of changes to its data
- Checkpoints
  - Marks the last point at which the database was written to disk
- Temporary files
  - Created to prevent loss when the server is busy converting binary data to readable text



- To retrieve log files created by Exchange
  - Use the Windows PowerShell cmdlet GetTransactionLogStats.ps1 Gather
- Tracking.log
  - An Exchange server log that tracks messages
- Another log used for investigating the Exchange environment is the troubleshooting log
  - Use Windows Event Viewer to read the log





## Examining Microsoft E-mail Server Logs (4 of 4)

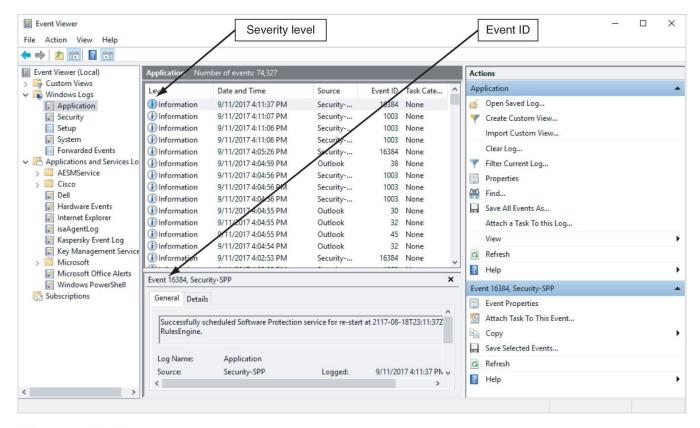


Figure 11-6 Viewing a log in Event Viewer



## Using Specialized E-mail Forensics Tools (1 of 3)

- Tools include:
  - DataNumen for Outlook and Outlook Express
  - FINALeMAIL for Outlook Express and Eudora
  - Sawmill-Novell GroupWise for log analysis
  - MailXaminer for multiple e-mail formatas and large data sets
  - Fookes Aid4Mail and MailBag Assistant
  - Paraben E-Mail Examiner
  - AccessData FTK for Outlook and Outlook Express
  - Ontrack Easy Recovery EmailRepair
  - R-Tools R-Mail
  - OfficeRecovery's MailRecovery



## Using Specialized E-mail Forensics Tools (2 of 3)

- Tools (continued)
  - MXToolBox for decoding e-mail headers
  - FreeViewer with free tools for various servers
- Tools allow you to find:
  - E-mail database files
  - Personal e-mail files
  - Offline storage files
  - Log files
- Advantage of using data recovery tools
  - You don't need to know how e-mail servers and clients work to extract data from them



- After you compare e-mail logs with messages, you should verify the:
  - Email account, message ID, IP address, date and time stamp to determine whether there's enough evidence for a warrant
- With some tools
  - You can scan e-mail database files on a suspect's Windows computer, locate any e-mails the suspect has deleted and restore them to their original state



- Magnet AXIOM has two modules:
  - Process
  - Examine
- Follow the steps in the activity on page 472 to learn how to use Magnet AXIOM to recover e-mails



## Using OSForensics to Recover E-mail (2 of 2)

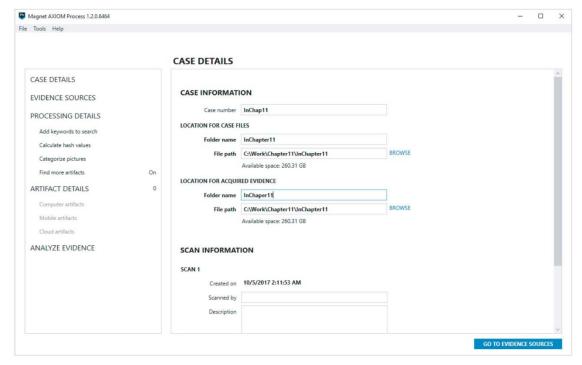


Figure 11-7 Entering information in the CASE DETAILS window

Source: Magnet Forensics, www.magnetforensics.com



# Using a Hex Editor to Carve E-mail Messages (1 of 4)

- Few vendors have products for analyzing e-mail in systems other than Microsoft
- mbox format
  - Stores e-mails in flat plaintext files
- Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (MIME) format
  - Used by vendor-unique e-mail file systems, such as Microsoft .pst or .ost
- Example: carve e-mail messages from Evolution





### Using a Hex Editor to Carve E-mail = Messages (2 of 4)

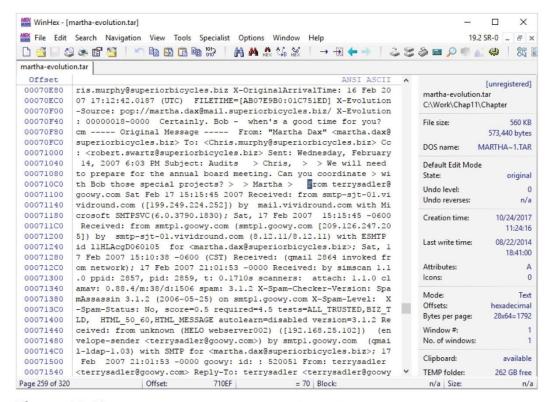


Figure 11-10 WinHex displaying the beginning of the e-mail from Terry Sadler

Source: X-Ways AG, www.x-ways.net





### Using a Hex Editor to Carve E-mail Messages (3 of 4)

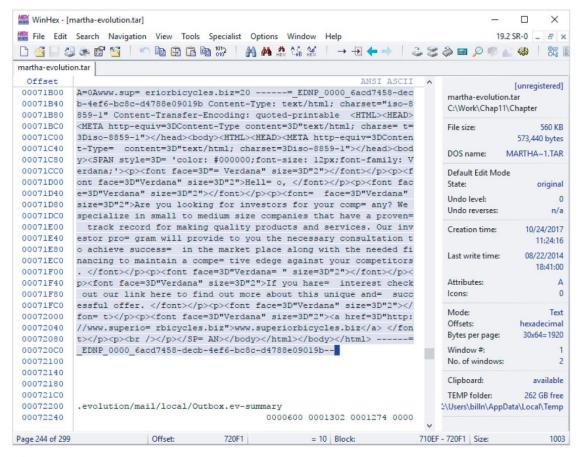


Figure 11-11 WinHex displaying the ending position of the e-mail from Terry Sadler

Source: X-Ways AG, www.x-ways.net





## Using a Hex Editor to Carve E-mail Messages (4 of 4)

```
martha-evolution.txt - Notepad
                                                                                                          File Edit Format View Help
From terrysadler@goowy.com Sat Feb 17 15:15:45 2007
Received: from smtp-sit-01.vividround.com ([199.249.224.252]) by
                                                                       mail.vividround.com with Microsoft
SMTPSVC(6.0.3790.1830); Sat, 17 Feb 2007
                                               15:15:45 -0600
Received: from smtp1.goowy.com (smtp1.goowy.com [209.126.247.205]) by smtp-sjt-01.vividround.com
(8.12.11/8.12.11) with ESMTP id 11HLAcgD060105 for <martha.dax@superiorbicycles.biz>; Sat, 17 Feb 2007 15:10:38
-0600 (CST)
Received: (qmail 2864 invoked from network); 17 Feb 2007 21:01:53 -0000Received: by simscan 1.1.0 ppid: 2857,
pid: 2859, t: 0.1710s scanners: attach: 1.1.0 clamav: 0.88.4/m:38/d:1506 spam: 3.1.2X-Spam-Checker-Version:
SpamAssassin 3.1.2 (2006-05-25) on smtp1.goowy.com
X-Spam-Level: X-Spam-Status: No, score=0.5 required=4.5 tests=ALL_TRUSTED,BIZ_TLD,
                                                                                       HTML_50_60, HTML_MESSAGE
autolearn=disabled version=3.1.2
Received: from unknown (HELO webserver002) ([192.168.25.102]) (envelope-sender <terrysadler@goowy.com>) by
smtp1.goowy.com (qmail-ldap-1.03) with SMTP for <martha.dax@superiorbicycles.biz>; 17 Feb
                                                                                               2007 21:01:53 -
0000goowy: id: : 520051From: terrysadler <terrysadler@goowy.com>
Reply-To: terrysadler <terrysadler@goowy.com>To: martha.dax@superiorbicycles.bizDate: Sat, 17 Feb 2007 21:15:44
GMTMessage-ID: <2af031584b5c460e95b36ddd6719529f@webserver002>Subject: InvestorsMIME-Version: 1.0X-Mailer: goowy
mail - http://www.goowy.comPriority: NormalX-Priority: 3Content-Type: multipart/alternative; boundary="----
= EDNP 0000 6acd7458-decb-4ef6-bc8c-d4788e09019b"X-ePrism-Trap: Default TrapX-eGuard-Score: () 0.6
BIZ TLD, HTML 50 60, HTML MESSAGEX-Scanned-By: ePrism email filtering appliance on 199.249.224.252Return-Path:
terrysadler@goowy.comX-OriginalArrivalTime: 17 Feb 2007 21:15:45.0640 (UTC)
                                                                              FILETIME=[C9DBFE80:01C752D8]X-
Evolution-Source: pop://martha.dax@mail.superiorbicycles.biz/X-Evolution: 0000001a-0010This is a multi-part
message in MIME format.----= EDNP 0000 6acd7458-decb-4ef6-bc8c-d4788e09019bContent-Type: text/plain;
charset="iso-8859-1"Content-Transfer-Encoding: quoted-printable=0AHello, =0A=0AAre you looking for investors for
your company? We speci=alize in small to medium size companies that have a proven track record= for making
quality products and services. Our investor program will pro=vide to you the necessary consultation to achieve
success in the market= place along with the needed financing to maintain a competive edege aga=inst your
competitors. =0A=0AIf you hare interest check out our link her=e to find out more about this unique and
successful offer. =0A=0Awww.sup=eriorbicycles.biz=20-----= EDNP 0000 6acd7458-decb-4ef6-bc8c-d4788e09019b
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face=3D"Verdana" size=3D"2">Hell=o, </font><font face=3D"Verdana" size=3D"2"></font><font>
face=3D"Verdana" size=3D"2">Are you looking for investors for your comp=any? We specialize in small to medium
size companies that have a proven= track record for making quality products and services. Our investor pro=gram
will provide to you the necessary consultation to achieve success= in the market place along with the needed
```

Figure 11-12 The Terry Sadler e-mail in Notepad





### Recovering Outlook Files (1 of 2)

- A forensics examiner recovering e-mail messages from Outlook
  - May need to reconstruct .pst files and messages
- With many advanced forensics tools
  - Deleted .pst files can be partially or completely recovered
- Scanpst.exe recovery tool
  - Comes with Microsoft Office
  - Can repair .ost files as well as .pst files





### Recovering Outlook Files (2 of 2)

- Guidance Software uses the SysTools plug-in
  - For Outlook e-mail through version 2013
  - Systools extracts .pst files from EnCase Forensic for analysis
- DataNumen Outlook Repair
  - One of the better e-mail recovery tools
  - Can recovery files from VMware and Virtual PC





### E-mail Case Studies

- In the Enron Case, more than 10,00 emails contained the following personal information:
  - 60 containing credit card numbers
  - 572 containing thousands of Social Security or other identity numbers
  - 292 containing birth dates
  - 532 containing information of a highly personal nature
    - Such as medical or legal matters



# Applying Digital Forensics to Social Media Communications (1 of 2)

- Online social networks (OSNs) are used to conduct business, brag about criminal activities, raise money, and have class discussions
- Social media can contain:
  - Evidence of cyberbullying and witness tampering
  - A company's position on an issue
  - Whether intellectual property rights have been violated
  - Who posted information and when



# Applying Digital Forensics to Social Media Communications (2 of 2)

- Social media can often substantiate a party's claims
- OSNs involve multiple jurisdictions that might even cross national boundaries
- A warrant or subpoena is needed to access social media servers
- In cases involving imminent danger, law enforcement can file for emergency requests





## Social Media Forensics on Mobile Devices

- Mobile devices
  - Majority of social network clients
- Evidence artifacts vary depending on the social media channel and the device
- iPhone and Android devices
  - Yielded the most information, and much of the data was stored in SQLite databases



# Forensics Tools for Social Media Investigations

- Software for social media forensics is being developed
  - Not many tools are available now
- There are questions about how the information these tools gather can be used in court or in arbitration
- Using social media forensics software might also require getting the permission of the people whose information is being examined



## Summary (1 of 3)

- E-mail fraudsters use phishing, pharming, and spoofing scam techniques
- In both Internet and intranet e-mail environments, e-mail messages are distributed from one central server to connected client computers
- E-mail investigations are similar to other kinds of investigations
- Forensics linguistics is a field where language and the law intersect to determine the author of e-mails, text messages, and other online communications
- Access victim's computer to recover evidence
  - Copy and print the e-mail message involved in the crime or policy violation



## Summary (2 of 3)

- Use the e-mail program that created the message to find the e-mail header, which provides supporting evidence and can help you track the suspect to the originating location
- Investigating e-mail abuse
  - Be familiar with e-mail servers and clients' operations
- For many e-mail investigations you can rely on e-mail message files, headers, and server log files



## Summary (3 of 3)

- For e-mail applications that use the mbox format, a hexadecimal editor can be used to carve messages manually
- Social media, or OSNs can provide evidence in criminal and civil cases
  - Software for collecting OSN information is being developed
- The majority of people engaging in social media communications are mobile users
- Social media forensics tools have evolved with the technology, and many forensics suites have built-in social media tools

