

\$1 million — for your help. But you must first open a Nigerian account with a minimum balance — of perhaps \$1,000 or \$10,000 — to facilitate the transfer. All you have to do is wire the money, and they'll take care of the rest.

There are many variations of this story, but they all have one thing in common: They're too good to be true. They offer you a huge amount of money later, in exchange for a relatively small amount of money now.

- » **Ads for pornographic websites:** Such websites are notorious for being top sources of viruses and other malware.
- » **Get-rich-quick schemes:** Pyramid schemes, multilevel marketing schemes, phony real estate schemes, you name it — they're all in a category of spam that promises to make you rich.
- » **Backscatter:** Backscatter is a particularly annoying phenomenon in which your inbox becomes flooded with dozens or perhaps hundreds of nondelivery reports (NDRs), indicating that an email that you allegedly sent didn't arrive. When you examine the NDRs, you can easily determine that you never sent an email to the intended recipient. What's actually going on here is that your email address has been used as the From address in a spam campaign, and you're receiving the NDRs from the mail servers of those spam emails that were not deliverable.



TIP

Though technically not spam, many users consider advertisements and newsletters from companies they *have* dealt with in the past to be a form of spam. An important element of the definition of *spam* is the word *unsolicited*. When you register at a company's website, you're effectively inviting that company to send you email.

Using Antispam Software

The most effective way to eliminate spam from your users' inboxes is to use anti-spam software. *Antispam software* examines all incoming email with the intent of distinguishing between spam and legitimate email. Depending on how the software is configured, email identified as spam is deleted, moved to a separate location, or simply marked as possible spam by adding a tag to the email's subject line.

Antispam software works by analyzing every piece of incoming email using sophisticated techniques that determine the likelihood that the email is, indeed, spam. When a certain threshold of probability is reached, the email is deemed to be spam and deleted, moved, or tagged. If the threshold is not reached, the email is passed on to the user as usual.