

14th April, 2004

To the Commissioners,

After hearing of your proposed plans for the above ruling, I was immediately compelled to voice my concerns – of which I believe there are many.

The problem of unsolicited commercial/bulk email is a big and serious one that affects a shockingly large percentage of users. And I wholeheartedly support your ‘intentions’ to dramatically decrease the high levels of ‘Spam’ being sent. I believe that those intentions are extremely well placed and highly commendable.

However, I am deeply disturbed about this proposed ‘requirement’ for merchants to maintain ‘suppression lists’.

I personally feel like it is a clumsy ‘knee-jerk’ reaction to the issue of spam and has not been properly thought out. I truly believe that this ruling will cause more harm than it will good.

I fear that the damage it will cause to consumers and ‘legitimate and responsible’ businesses could only be described as... devastating! The costs, problems and issues associated with this idea are very far reaching and I urge you to reconsider this particular ruling.

If it does ‘alleviate’ the problem of spam a little, I’m convinced that the costs will quickly outweigh any initial benefits that the idea seemed to promise.

If it is made compulsory to use suppression lists it will seriously damage many thousands of those legitimate publications available on the internet. My main concern is the harmful effect it will have on these publishers who require permission from the consumer prior to adding them to ‘any’ list.

These publications are NOT the problem that this ruling was designed to solve, but that is exactly what its knock-on effect will be – period!

This will also include significant harm to consumers, because of the problem of properly knowing their intent when they unsubscribe from a list. On top of that, these suppression lists could easily fall into the hands of spammers, leading to more spam instead of less.

I really am surprised at the potential problems this ruling could involve – and I’m even more surprised that the ruling made it this far without these issues being taken into account. I can only feel that this ruling will create more problems than it solves.

And whilst I applaud the Commissions commitment to the end of spam and spamming, I strongly urge you to reconsider it as a ‘solution’ – and would ask you to look at it’s almost certain ramifications and their knock-on effects.

Respectfully,

Paul J. Maxwell
Co. Antrim, United Kingdom.