

HOW SAUDI ARABIA IS FIGHTING SPAM

INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has a comprehensive and practical strategy to fight SPAM based on international bodies' recommendations and best countries' experiences. The strategy focuses on the following key areas:

- Regulatory;
- Enforcement;
- Industry driven activities;
- Technical solutions;
- Education and awareness;
- International co-operation and exchange, and
- SPAM measurement

1. REGULATORY

The regulatory policy, combined with the Saudi Telecommunications and Anti e-Crime Acts, sets up a scheme for addressing electronic SPAM messages within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

- o The regulatory policy defines SPAM in the Kingdom as: “Any unsolicited electronic message that contains commercial or objectionable content transmitted without prior consent through any communication medium including, but not limited to, e-mails, Mobile Messaging, fax, Bluetooth and instant messaging services”.
- o The regulatory policy provides detailed requirements to comply with legitimate messaging.
- o The regulatory policy addresses national and international SPAM and deals with ancillary elements such as address harvesting, privacy and private right of action.
- o Compliance with the regulatory policy is mandatory and CITC will ensure continuous compliance by all Saudi entities with this policy.

2. ENFORCEMENT

The enforcement of the anti-SPAM policy framework will be based on the following elements:

- o Enforcement agencies were defined to enforce anti-SPAM policy framework in the Kingdom as follows:
 - The Ministry of interior (MOI) deals with SPAM associated with Anti e-crime Act violations, i.e. criminal and objectionable content, and
 - CITC will be in charge of SPAM messages with unobjectionable content.
- o Ensuring coordination between MOI and CITC is crucial. Mechanisms for guaranteeing such coordination is still under examination (such as setting up a Cross- Agency Program Steering Committee).

- o MOI and CITC will have joint responsibilities at the national level such as monitoring the state of SPAM in the Kingdom and ensuring the adherence by all parties to the Anti-SPAM policy framework
- o To tackle international SPAM coming from outside the Kingdom, CITC was designated as the nodal agency where:
 - CITC will be participating in recognised international bodies and sign agreements to cooperate on enforcement of laws relating to SPAM.
 - CITC will provide an international contact point to the outside world, to facilitate the international cooperation process
- o A Complaint notifying and handling process involving CITC and MOI is defined and will be implemented soon.

3. INDUSTRY DRIVEN INITIATIVES

- o Since it is very difficult for a regulator to fight SPAM alone and hence, without industry cooperation, it was considered fundamental that major industry players, such as Internet Service Providers, Mobile Service Providers, Bulk SMS providers, and electronic marketers put reasonable efforts to fight against SPAM.
- o Accordingly, and besides the telecom licensing agreements, a separate mandatory code of conduct that focuses on the implementation of suitable controls to address SPAM was designed for ISPs, eMarketers, and Mobile service providers.
- o The codes of conduct clearly state the obligations of the ISPs, eMarketers and Mobile service providers in the context of what is permissible and what is not permissible.
- o Enhancing compliance through use of suitable audit mechanisms was considered fundamental.

4. TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

- o Besides legislation, enforcement, and industry cooperation, solutions to eliminating SPAM need to be supported by appropriate technical measures.
- o These technical measures will be the responsibility of various stakeholders such as users, companies and service providers.

5. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

- o In order to ensure the effectiveness of the Anti-SPAM policy framework, a suitable awareness plan is created among the relevant stakeholders. This covers the public, companies, and service providers.
- o A website will be developed providing up-to-date SPAM related information regarding:
 - New SPAM-related Saudi rules or regulations,
 - Further educate stakeholders and end-users on the negative effects of SPAM and how to deal with it.
 - New information published by international bodies and best practices
 - Recent information about new types and media used for SPAMming, new technologies to combat SPAM, etc
 - SPAM-related statistics in the Kingdom and abroad

- o Awareness campaigns will be run regularly in the Kingdom.

6. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

- o Given the predominance of SPAM that originates from outside the Kingdom, suitable mechanisms will be established with other countries to coordinate their Anti-SPAM efforts in order to ensure that they are able to reach SPAMmers based in other countries and prosecute them
- o It is recommended that the Kingdom joins international bodies fighting against SPAM and signs agreements at the international and regional level to facilitate suing and prosecuting SPAMmers.

7. SPAM MEASUREMENT

- o It was considered fundamental to track the effectiveness of the Anti-SPAM control measures adopted in the Kingdom.
- o SPAM level will be monitored on an ongoing-basis which will determine the weaknesses of the framework and therefore suggesting improvement measures.