



Respect your Friends, Family ^{no} Club Members when Emailing

by Ross Hendry

We have all at some time received a bulk email. (i.e. one sent to several people). It may be from a friend sending you a joke, a family member inviting you to a party/event, or a business advising you of their latest offer/event. This email showed you all of the contact addresses of the other recipients, and your email address was visible to all.

So why is this wrong?

This shows a complete disrespect for the privacy of all recipients and here is why. I would no more send out a traditional (snail mail) letter inviting all of my friends, or family or customers, to an event and **include everyone's postal address** on the letter/invite. In fact, if one friend asked me for the contact information of another, I would check with the friend who's address was requested, that they were happy for me to give their address to my other friend before doing so. It is just respect and common courtesy.



What harm could be done?

Take the example of a joke circular - I receive a circular which has 25 to 30 email addresses visible to all; the chances are that I do not know any of the other recipients, so I do not know who is receiving my address, or if their computer is secure, do they have proper antivirus? Then the other 29 recipients may forward the email to another 20 to 30 people and so on, potentially 580 people, then if those 580 send it out to their 20 friends then that is potentially 11,600 people - and in next to no time the email could be seen by millions.

Who knows if one of the future recipients is harvesting email addresses and selling them to unscrupulous third parties. If the joke is very funny it could be in front of millions of people within a very short time. It only takes one of them to copy and paste the email addresses into a file and offer them for sale on the internet - it is like the wild west online and anything could happen to the addresses when sold.

By simply putting the email addresses of the people you would like to receive the email, in the **Bcc** box you prevent all of this from happening.

What is the Bcc and where did it come from?

Our current email systems were modelled on traditional office correspondence such as the memorandum. So you have the ability to send an email much like an office letter or memo to one or multiple recipients.

This is made possible using the **'To'** box, where you enter the name of the primary recipient and you could send a **'cc- carbon copy'** to other recipients using the cc box, you could also have a **'bcc - blind carbon copy'** by using the bcc box, this was so that undisclosed recipients could also have a copy.

On your email, this means that the primary recipient's email address in the **'To'** box is visible to all recipients of the email, and this is also true of the **'cc'** box. However, those recipients whose email addresses are entered in to the **'bcc'** box enjoy privacy, because it does not display their email addresses to all of the other recipients of the email, only the sender of the email is able to see all of the addresses in the bcc box.

Example of using the bcc field/box

When I send out the email each month advising people of the English Film available in the Cinema at La Chataigneraie, I put my wife's email as the primary recipient, then the other 200 or so film goers on the list are sent using the Bcc box. Other people create an email address called 'undisclosed recipients' or similar, and use

this to address the email in the **'To'** box, this helps them to see what others receive and keeps everyone's addresses private.

French Versions of Bcc

If you are using a French email system you will find **'bcc'** as **'cci'** which stands for *'carbon copie invisible'* or *'copie cachée'*, invariably you access this by clicking on the **á** or **Á** (To field), then in the dialogue box that opens, you should see a list of your contacts in the left hand side and on the right, three boxes to insert recipient addresses, they are:

- The To box in French is **'á'** or **'to'**;
- The Carbon copy box in French is **'cc'**
- The Blind carbon copy box **'bcc'** in French is **'cci'**.

Please remember, email addresses in the blind copy, bcc/ci field/box will not be displayed to any other recipients, only the named recipient and the sender can see their email addresses.

Business Users

If you are a business and do not use the bcc box, then you are inviting anyone, including your competitor/s, to copy the list of email addresses and email them with their own products and services, potentially losing a customer or at best a sale.

Common Sense

If you are inviting your close friends and/or family and you know they all know one another, I believe that you could be forgiven for not using the bcc, but it is still a potential problem in case one of them forwards your email or their email account gets hacked - so I consider it best practice to use it at all times.

To avoid looking like secret squirrel! you can always add a list of the recipients names in the body of the email (without their addresses), then you are letting people know who is coming or who is on your list without disclosing their address - far more civilised and giving all of the recipients privacy. I have used this when planning events, giving the recipients the chance to share lifts to the venues etc by contacting people they know, or for those they do not know, requesting the contact info via me.

You may learn more here:

- www.cs.rutgers.edu/~watrous/bcc-for-privacy.html
- www.commentcamarche.net/faq/842-messagerie-copie-cachee-masquer-les-adresses-des-destinataire

Do you use AOL? Then please read here about forwarding email to your friends and family. www.kassj.com/netiquette/aolfwd.html

Ross Hendry is the proprietor of Interface Consulting and Engineering, who has over 42 years experience in Communications, Computer Technology and Direct Marketing. (See advert below).

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Email: rs.hendry@gmail.com
Website: www.seowise.co.uk

Location: 85120 Breuil Barret
Siret: 515 246 544 00016