

Ice cream for 419-Scammers

Written by Julian Beams
Friday, 13 May 2011 22:12

Ok, so the heading is just to get you to read. Unfortunately, the Surprise Lottery Win, the box of money needing to be moved and the deceased relative of the poor orphan are all still alive and well. Even so, 419scammers are getting their just desserts.

What you may not know though is that there are a large group of somewhat crazy and cruel enthusiasts who delight in making the lives of scammers a little more miserable. I joined such a forum of scambaiters, www.419eater.com, at the beginning of March after one too many scam letter sent me over the edge. While phishing is promptly dealt with by banks, in their own best interest, other kinds of scams are largely ignored. This means that law enforcement doesn't really have a response to this scourge. The SAP supposedly has a Task Team assigned to 419 scams and lottery fraud, but since I can't get them to acknowledge any emails, I can't confirm or deny they exist. They obviously have bigger problems.

Where the professionals don't react, enter a bunch of individuals who have found an outlet for their antisocial tendencies in scambaiting. They can be downright mean. but remember that a scammer doesn't give a damn for anything except the payoff. It takes time and effort to play the victim and then turn the tables on a scammer, but it also immensely satisfying. I decided to bait only local lads (baiters jargon for scammers) tracing them through the IP address in the header of their emails. So far all my lads have been from Gauteng and most use MTN or Vodacom data connections for their Internet. I am told in the forum that lads from our country are fairly common.

My first bait netted me the banking details of a Nigerian lad from Mellville who thought I was going to pay him R4000. Shame. Through channels that have nothing to do with the local banks the forum got his bank account suspended. I'd call that a big dollop of icecream. So far I have closed 2 fake bank sites and had 3 email domains used by scammers suspended, thanks to co-operative hosting companies and system administrators. My own small contribution to the fight on crime.

If you want to make a contribution, or have been a victim, wander over to www.419eater.com. The forum is a good place to start if you want to take part in this sport, as you will learn how to stay safe online (never reveal you personal details to scammers) and there are tools and tips to help you send a lad on safari to Namibia looking for a big box of money that doesn't exist.