

Legit or spam?

Not a week goes by that I don't get several unsolicited emails from people/businesses who think I need financing, or a direct marketing list, or help with my website, or (just got this today) think I may want voice over talent (!). Almost all these emails are personalized to me, or at least to my website (as in "Dear Deborahbrody.com"). Some get my name from my website (presumably after doing a search) and some from LinkedIn. Others, I don't have the foggiest idea of where or how they found me (or even why they are contacting me). Very few seem to know much about my business, and none are companies I have done business with in the past. In short, lots of businesses reach out via email to try to drum up sales or generate cash.

Is it legit, is it spam, or is it a scam?

But how many of these are legit, and how many are scammers/spammers? Where do we draw the line between an honest attempt to generate a lead based on internet research, and spam? There are probably a few indicators of spam/scams:

- 1) Using the same pitch over and over and over, sometimes from different names within the "company." In other words, more than one inquiry.
- 2) Adding, without permission, your name to an email marketing list, and putting the onus on you to unsubscribe (this is a direct violation of the CAN-SPAM rules and can/should be reported as such).
- 3) A sketchy sounding proposition (financing with no credit check, for example).

Is this company a legit spammer?

For the past several weeks, I have been getting emails from

something called Imparture about social media marketing classes in Washington, DC. I was getting about three emails a week, every week. They all had the unsubscribe feature, and finally, this week, I unsubscribed (not that I had subscribed in the first place). Then yesterday, I got a personalized email from "Elliot.": Here it is:

Hi Deborah,

Did you get a chance to consider my last email?

Check out our upcoming Google Analytics training course taking place in Washington DC.

There are only a few spots left so sign up if you are interested.

All the best,

Elliot Jay

Client Relationship Manager

Imparture

London / New York / San Francisco

Now, I don't know Elliot, and as I said, I had already unsubscribed from these emails. I wrote him and told him I would be reporting him for spam. Then, today, I got this email from "Noah":

Hi Deborah,

I came across your profile and saw that your skill set contains Social Media Marketing, and wanted to reach out with an opportunity.

We have only a few spots remaining in our upcoming Social Media Marketing Immersive course in Washington DC.

This course will give you an advanced level of understanding regarding Social Media Marketing, and add significant value

to your skillset – might this be something of interest?

You can find out more about the course, as well as sign up, here.

Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

All the best,

Noah Kelsey

Client Relationship Manager

Imparture

London / New York / San Francisco

I looked up Imparture and the company does have a website, a LinkedIn profile, and even a Twitter account (with only 500 or so followers), which look legit enough. On the other hand, I did find a review stating that the company had scheduled a class, cancelled it, and didn't issue refunds (sketchy!).

This company may indeed be legitimate (albeit with questionable customer service), but its marketing practices are definitely spammy. As I said before, *I have never signed up for a class or to get these emails.* And I have "unsubscribed" and have since gotten two more emails. Any legitimate marketing effort would ask for permission to add you to a list, and would respect an unsubscribe request. This company has failed on both ends. It added me to an email list without my express consent (and again, I am not sure where/how they got my email address), and it has ignored my unsubscribe request, twice so far.

Do not be a spammer!

If you are a legitimate business, do not follow the scammer's playbook. Sending unsolicited mail is against CAN-SPAM rules.

Want to learn more? Check out the FTC's CAN-SPAM Act: A compliance guide for business.

Have you had a similar experience? What is your take on the legit versus spam discussion?