

Doesn't matter what your marketing technique is for your compiler if nobody actually writes code in your language any more

 devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20081112-00

November 12, 2008



Raymond Chen

I mentioned [Terry Zink's Anti-spam blog](#) (“Protecting your mail from the scum of the internet”) during one of my quarterly “borg-edition” linkfests. The article about [how much money a spammer actually makes](#) was quite interesting. One thing that caught my eye was the insanely low sales rate that was needed in order to make the enterprise lucrative. Only 0.12% of the messages get clicked on, and of those, only 0.5% result in a sale, yet with a sales rate of just 0.0006%, the spammer pulled down an impressive \$7690 per week, or over \$300,000 per year. ([Researchers who infiltrated the Storm botnet](#) have their own estimates. Terry's story is more interesting to me since it comes from an *actual (reformed) spammer.*)

That reminded me of a story told to me by the person who worked on Microsoft's FORTRAN compiler. (Yes, we had one.) He mentioned that one of their attempts to market the compiler was to include a Microsoft FORTRAN business reply card in a targeted mailing to subscribers to a well-known technical computer magazine.

“Normally, these sort of targetted direct mail efforts generate maybe a 3% or 4% response rate if you do well. We got two.”

— *Two percent. Well, that's not too bad, considering this is FORTRAN we're talking about.*

“No, I didn't say two percent. Just two. As in, we received two postcards.”

— *Oh.*

[Raymond Chen](#)

Follow

