



IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF KING

MICROSOFT CORPORATION, a
Washington corporation,

Plaintiff,

v.

JOHN DOES 1-20,

Defendants.

No. **03-2-27987-1SEA**
COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES AND
INJUNCTIVE RELIEF

Plaintiff Microsoft Corporation ("Microsoft") brings this action against JOHN DOES 1-20.

I. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This is an action for trespass to chattels, conversion and for violations of the Washington Commercial Electronic Mail Act (RCW Ch. 19.190), the Washington Consumer Protection Act, and the federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (18 U.S.C. § 1030(a)). Microsoft seeks damages and injunctive relief to remedy defendants' unauthorized use of Microsoft's computers, computer systems and to send millions of misleading and deceptive unsolicited commercial e-mail messages, or "spam," in violation of Microsoft's policies and state and federal law.

1 2. This Court has personal jurisdiction over the defendants, who have engaged in
2 business activities in and directed to Washington, have committed a tortious act within the
3 state, and have used personal property in the state.

4 3. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to RCW § 4.12.020-.025 in that a
5 substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims pled herein occurred in
6 King County, the causes of action arose in King County, and work was performed in King
7 County.

8 **II. THE PARTIES**

9 4. Plaintiff Microsoft is a Washington corporation with its principal place of
10 business in Redmond, Washington.

11 5. Microsoft is unaware of the true names and capacities of defendants sued
12 herein as DOES 1 - 20, inclusive, and therefore sues these defendants by such fictitious
13 names. Microsoft will amend this complaint to allege their true names and capacities when
14 ascertained. Microsoft is informed and believes and therefore alleges that each of the
15 fictitiously named defendants is responsible in some manner for the occurrences herein
16 alleged, and that Microsoft's injuries as herein alleged were proximately caused by such
17 defendants. These fictitiously named defendants are herein referred to as "defendants."

18 6. The actions alleged herein to have been undertaken by the defendants were
19 undertaken by each defendant individually, were actions that each defendant caused to occur,
20 were actions that each defendant authorized, controlled, directed, or had the ability to
21 authorize, control or direct, and/or were actions each defendant assisted, participated in or
22 otherwise encouraged, and are actions for which each defendant is liable. Each defendant
23 aided and abetted the actions of the defendants set forth below, in that each defendant had
24 knowledge of those actions, provided assistance and benefited from those actions, in whole or
25 in part. Each of the defendants was the agent of each of the remaining defendants, and in
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1 doing the things hereinafter alleged, was acting within the course and scope of such agency
2 and with the permission and consent of other defendants.

3 **III. NATURE OF PLAINTIFF'S INTERNET E-MAIL SERVICES**

4 7. Microsoft owns and operates interactive computer services that enable its
5 customers to, among other things, access the Internet and exchange electronic mail ("e-mail")
6 on the Internet. Microsoft owns and maintains computers and other equipment, including
7 specialized computers or "servers" that process e-mail messages and otherwise support its e-
8 mail services. Microsoft maintains this equipment in Washington and California, among
9 other states. E-mail sent to and from Microsoft's customers is processed through and stored
10 on these computers. Microsoft is an internet service provider ("ISP"), is an "interactive
11 computer service" as defined by RCW § 19.190.010. Microsoft's computers and computer
12 systems are "protected computers" under the federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, 18
13 U.S.C. § 1030(e)(2).

14 8. One of Microsoft's services is "MSN Hotmail" which provides free and
15 subscription based email on the Internet through a web-based e-mail service that can be
16 accessed at www.hotmail.com. MSN Hotmail allows account-holders to exchange e-mail
17 messages with any other e-mail user who has an Internet e-mail address throughout the world.
18 MSN Hotmail has millions of registered accounts, whose users all have unique e-mail
19 addresses ending in "@hotmail.com."

20 9. Another of Microsoft's services is "MSN Internet Access" (referred to herein
21 as "MSN") which provides free and subscription-based e-mail services that can be accessed
22 on the web or via Microsoft's proprietary network. MSN allows account-holders to exchange
23 e-mail messages with any other e-mail user who has an Internet e-mail address throughout the
24 world. MSN Has millions of registered accounts, whose users all have unique e-mail
25 addresses ending in "@msn.com."

1 **IV. THE NATURE OF UNSOLICITED E-MAIL OR "SPAM"**

2 10. Unsolicited commercial e-mail is often referred to as "spam." The
3 transmission of spam, a practice referred to as "spamming," by persons known as
4 "spammers," is widely condemned in the Internet community, and is of significant concern
5 and economic detriment to Microsoft and its customers.

6 11. By using the Internet to send commercial e-mail messages, spammers not only
7 obtain significant cost savings, but impose significant economic burdens on ISPs such as
8 Microsoft. Although it costs very little for a spammer to transmit innumerable e-mail
9 messages, handling the enormous volume of e-mail initiated by spammers places a
10 tremendous burden on Microsoft.

11 12. Microsoft's computers and computer systems are designed and created solely
12 for the benefit and the non-commercial personal use of its customers. The computers and
13 computer systems have finite capacity and are not designed to accommodate innumerable
14 mass mailings from spammers. Microsoft has been required to expend substantial amounts
15 for new equipment to handle the mass mailings by spammers.

16 13. Spamming also can and does result in the degradation and disruption of
17 Microsoft's computers and computer systems. Spam demands storage space and processing
18 capacity of Microsoft's computers and computer systems, making those resources unavailable
19 to serve the legitimate needs of Microsoft's customers. The diversion of these resources from
20 processing authorized e-mail impairs the normal operation of the computers and computer
21 systems. Therefore, the value of that equipment is diminished by spamming.

22 14. Spamming also has significant impact on the recipients of spam. Individuals
23 who receive spam must take the time and effort to sort through larger volumes of received e-
24 mail, must attempt to distinguish spam from legitimate e-mail, and ultimately discard this
25 unsolicited material. In an effort to mislead e-mail recipients and to make it more difficult for
26 them to identify and discard these unsolicited advertisements, spammers frequently use

1 deceptive methods, such as using a false or misleading information in the e-mail subject lines.
2 When a spammer uses a deceptive subject line to disguise spam as legitimate personal or
3 business e-mail, it causes additional inconvenience and frustration to spam recipients.

4 15. Spam frequently involves products or services of questionable value, or
5 materials of an adult or pornographic nature. Unsolicited advertisements for such products or
6 services, often disguised, are a particularly obtrusive form of spam and are often the subject of
7 customer complaints.

8 16. Spammers know that their bulk e-mailing practices inevitably lead to a
9 significant portion of their e-mail being undeliverable. When an e-mail message is
10 undeliverable, additional e-mail messages ("bounce-back messages") are generated to advise
11 the sender and the ISP of this fact. Rather than have their own computer equipment burdened
12 with voluminous bounce-back messages, spammers craft their messages to direct the bounce-
13 back messages to others. Thus, a spammer who sends spam by using a MSN or MSN
14 Hotmail return address can be assured that the inevitable, innumerable bounce-back messages
15 will be returned to that address, not to the spammer's own computer system. This adds to
16 Microsoft's burdens, as its computers must process and store the bounce-back messages from
17 these spam mailings.

18 17. In an attempt to protect itself and its customers from spam, Microsoft has
19 expended significant resources to developing technologies and practices to prevent its
20 subscribers from sending or receiving spam. Spammers, however, continue to adopt practices
21 and technological devices to evade Microsoft's technologies and to frustrate Microsoft's
22 efforts.

23 18. In passing the Commercial Electronic Mail Act, RCW Ch. 19.190, in 1998,
24 Washington became one of the first states to regulate spam. The legislature has recognized
25 that the spamming practices prohibited by the Act are "matters vitally affecting the public
26

1 interests” and are unfair and deceptive practices which impact Washington businesses and
2 consumers.

3 19. Microsoft has invested substantial time and money in efforts to disassociate
4 itself from spam and the spammers who promote and profit from spam, as well as in seeking
5 to protect its registered users worldwide from receiving spam.

6 20. Microsoft has a clearly articulated policy prohibiting the use of its services for
7 junk e-mail, spamming, or any unsolicited messages (commercial or otherwise). Microsoft’s
8 policies also prohibit automated queries of any sort, harvesting or collection of e-mail
9 addresses, and any use of the services that is not personal and non-commercial. These
10 policies are included in the Terms of Use for MSN and MSN Hotmail, which can be accessed
11 via a clearly marked link on www.msn.com, as well as on the home pages for each of the
12 services.

13 **V. DEFENDANTS’ UNLAWFUL CONDUCT**

14 21. Microsoft is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that defendants
15 have been—and are currently involved in—widespread spamming by sending misleading,
16 deceptive and unsolicited commercial email to MSN Hotmail account holders.

17 22. Microsoft is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that its MSN
18 Hotmail service has received millions of unsolicited e-mail messages from defendants.

19 23. Many of those e-mail messages purport to originate from domain that either do
20 not exist or belong to third parties. Microsoft is informed and believes, and on that basis
21 alleges, that defendants did not have permission to use those domain names.

22 24. Many of those e-mail messages contain false and misleading subject lines
23 including, but not limited to: “5:45:00 A.M.” and “check it out 12:19:10 A.M.”

24 25. Many of those e-mails include a return path to a non-existent (or spoofed)
25 hotmail.com account.

1 26. As a result of the defendants' actions, Microsoft's computer equipment and
2 servers were required to process thousands of improper spam e-mails. These e-mails threaten
3 to delay and otherwise adversely affect MSN Hotmail subscribers in sending and receiving
4 legitimate e-mail, and have resulted in and continue to result in significant costs to Microsoft.
5 Additionally, defendants' illegitimate spam campaign has resulted in complaints by the
6 recipients of defendants' spam.

7 **COUNT I**
8 **(Trespass to Chattels)**

9 27. Microsoft realleges and incorporates by this reference each and every
10 allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 26 above.

11 28. The computers, computer networks and computer services that constitute
12 Microsoft's MSN Hotmail e-mail system are the personal property of Microsoft.

13 29. Defendants were aware that their actions were specifically prohibited by
14 Microsoft's Terms of Service and/or were on notice that their actions were not authorized by
15 Microsoft in any way.

16 30. Defendants have knowingly, intentionally and without authorization used and
17 intentionally trespassed upon Microsoft's property.

18 31. As a result of defendants' actions, Microsoft has been damaged in an amount
19 to be proven at trial.

20 **COUNT II**
21 **(Conversion)**

22 32. Microsoft realleges and incorporates by this reference each and every
23 allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 31 above.

24 33. Defendants have willfully interfered with and converted Microsoft's personal
25 property, without lawful justification, as a result of which Microsoft has been deprived of
26 possession and use of its property.

1 34. As a result of defendants' actions, Microsoft has been damaged in an amount
2 to be proven at trial.

3 **COUNT III**
4 **(Violation of the Washington Commercial Electronic Mail Act (RCW Ch. 19.190) and**
5 **the Washington Consumer Protection Act (RCW Ch. 19.86))**

6 35. Microsoft realleges and incorporates by this reference each and every
7 allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 34 above.

8 36. Defendants initiated the transmission, conspired with one another to initiate the
9 transmission or assisted in the transmission of commercial e-mail messages from a computer
10 located in Washington and/or to an e-mail address that they knew, or had reason to know, is
11 held by a Washington resident. Those commercial e-mail messages:

12 a) used Microsoft's or another third party's internet domain names without
13 permission;

14 b) misrepresented or obscured information identifying the true point of origin or the
15 transmission path of a commercial electronic e-mail message; or

16 c) contained false or misleading information in the subject line.

17 37. As a result of defendants' actions, Microsoft has been damaged in an amount
18 to be proven at trial.

19 38. Defendants' actions violated RCW § 19.190.020, and entitle Microsoft to
20 actual damages or statutory damages of \$1,000 per email, whichever is greater.

21 39. Defendants' actions affected the public interest, are unfair or deceptive acts in
22 trade or commerce and unfair methods of competition, and violated the Washington
23 Consumer Protection Act, RCW Ch. 19.86. Microsoft is entitled to treble damages and an
24 award of its attorneys' fees and costs under that Act.

1 **COUNT IV**
2 **(Violation of the federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act – 18 U.S.C. § 1030(a)(4), (g))**

3 40. Microsoft realleges and incorporates by this reference each and every
4 allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 39 above.

5 41. By the actions alleged above, defendants knowingly and with intent to defraud,
6 accessed Microsoft's protected computer system, without authorization and/or in excess of
7 authorized access.

8 42. By the actions alleged above, defendants furthered the intended fraud and
9 obtained unauthorized use of Microsoft's protected computer system, and the value of that use
10 exceeds more than \$5,000 in any 1-year period.

11 43. Defendants' activity constitutes a violation of the federal Computer Fraud and
12 Abuse Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1030(a)(4), and Microsoft is entitled to damages under that Act.
13 Microsoft is also entitled under the Act to injunctive and equitable relief against defendants.

14 **COUNT V**
15 **(Violation of the federal Computer Fraud and Abuse Act – 18 U.S.C. § 1030(a)(5), (g))**

16 44. Microsoft realleges and incorporates by this reference each and every
17 allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 43 above.

18 45. By the actions alleged above, defendants intentionally and knowingly accessed
19 Microsoft's protected computer system, and knowingly caused the transmission of a program,
20 information, code, or command, without authorization and/or in excess of authorized access.

21 46. By the actions alleged above, defendants intentionally caused damage, without
22 authorization, to Microsoft's protected computer system, and the aggregate loss resulting
23 therefrom exceeds at least \$5,000 in value.

24 47. Defendants' activity constitutes a violation of the federal Computer Fraud and
25 Abuse Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1030(a)(5), and Microsoft is entitled to damages under that Act.
26 Microsoft is also entitled under the Act to injunctive and equitable relief against defendants.

1 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

2 WHEREFORE, Microsoft respectfully requests that the Court enter judgment against
3 defendants, jointly and severally, as follows:

4 1. That the Court issue temporary and permanent injunctive relief against
5 defendants, and that defendants, their officers, agents, representatives, servants, employees,
6 attorneys, successors and assignees, and all others in active concert or participation with
7 defendants, be enjoined and restrained from:

8 a) establishing any accounts with Microsoft's MSN or MSN Hotmail
9 services;

10 b) using Microsoft's computers and computer systems in connection with
11 sending commercial e-mail messages;

12 c) making unauthorized use of Microsoft's computers and computer
13 systems;

14 d) continuing to violate Microsoft's Terms of Service;

15 e) continuing to violate the Washington Commercial Electronic Mail Act;
16 and

17 f) assisting, aiding, or abetting any other person or business entity in
18 engaging in or performing any of the activities referred to in subparagraphs a) through
19 e) above.

20 2. That the Court award Microsoft actual damages, liquidated damages and
21 statutory damages, in amount to be proven at trial;

22 3. That the Court award Microsoft its attorneys' fees and costs incurred herein;
23 and

24 4. That the Court grant Microsoft such other or additional relief as is just and
25 proper.
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