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Judge kicks notorious spammer off Facebook

Sanford Wallace's spam career dates back to the 1990s

Robert McMillan

March 3, 2009 ([IDG News Service](#)) A federal judge in San Jose has ordered convicted spammer Sanford Wallace to stay away from Facebook.

Facebook Inc. sued Wallace and two other men last week in an effort to cut down on spam and phishing schemes on its social networking site. On Monday, Judge Jeremy Fogel of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California issued a temporary restraining order barring Wallace and two other alleged spammers, Adam Arzoomanian and Scott Shaw, from accessing Facebook's network.

In court filings, Facebook argues that these men gained access to legitimate Facebook accounts and then used them to spam the profile pages of the account holders' friends. Facebook allows users to post messages on the "walls" of the profile pages of their friends.

The Facebook spam messages served two functions -- they attempted to lure users into visiting phishing Web sites where they could be tricked up into giving up their Facebook log-in credentials, and they routed victims to commercial Web sites that paid the spammers for the traffic, Facebook said.

News of the lawsuit was [first reported](#) on Friday by Inside Facebook, a Web site for Facebook developers.

Wallace is one of the country's most notorious spammers, with a career that dates back to the 1990s. Last May, a federal judge found him and a partner guilty under the CAN-SPAM act and ordered them to pay \$230 million for phishing and spamming MySpace users with links to gambling, ringtone and pornography Web sites.

Spammers and phishers have been hitting Facebook particularly hard over the past year and a half, said Dave Jevans, chairman of the Anti-Phishing Working Group. Because Facebook spam often looks like it comes from a friend, it can be very effective. And because it's Web-based, it skirts traditional e-mail spam filtering tools, Jevans said.

"Some of the bigger guys can get a million people a day to look at their stuff," he said. "It's occasional, but you'll see it."

Spam is just one of several ills plaguing the social network. Over the past few days, Facebook users have also been hit with [a new variant of the Koobface worm](#), which tries to trick victims into installing malicious software onto their PCs. Also circulating around the social network are [fake applications](#) that send out messages such as "F a c e b o o k - closing down!!!" or "Error Check System" to try to trick users into sending



the messages to their friends.

Late last year, the judge in the Wallace case awarded Facebook a record \$873 million in damages after Facebook accused other spammers of using stolen log-ins to pump out more than 4 million spam messages. Facebook says that it doesn't expect the spammers in that case to pay up, but the company hopes that the ruling may serve as a deterrent.

Jevans agreed that lawsuits probably won't stop the big-time Facebook spammers, but he said they could deter the little guys.