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**December 4, 2003
Incaimail Aims at ISPs With Free DEA Offering**

By [Craig McGuire](#)

With most major Internet service providers rushing spam safeguards to market this year -- including Yahoo!, MSN, and AOL -- startup Incaimail is rolling out a new free service that integrates up to 25 disposable e-mail accounts (known as DEAs) into a single

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account.

At least one major ISP has debuted a DEA feature. Yahoo! launched its AddressGuard DEA product as part of a package of spam-fighting features included in its Yahoo! Mail Plus paid e-mail offering, for which the ISP giant charges \$29.99 annually.

"We take the DEA concept a few steps further, as the services available are not only pay services, but are really only alias forwarding services," said Incamail CEO and Founder Valentine Sheldon. "We provide 25 mailboxes integrated into a single account, and offer six megabytes of storage."

DEAs aren't exactly new. Service providers such as Spamex, Mailblocks, and Mailshell already allow consumers to cut down on spam by establishing multiple addresses that they can use when they register or buy something online.

"But I haven't seen any free DEA services, which should set this product apart from the others," said Kevin George, vice president of products for e-mail marketing provider Silverpop.

George, who also co-chairs the industry consortium E-mail Processing Industry Alliance, said that while there are other pay services that provide single access, though for a smaller number of aliases, the ease-of-use of managing 25 aliases from one location is a major selling point.

Founded in 2000 in the aftermath of the tech implosion, Incamail gobbled up ample hardware at a fraction of what it would have cost just months earlier. Beta-tested for 12,000 users spread throughout the United States earlier this year, Incamail.com is reinforcing its chances of adoption by embedding functionality directly into the DEAs. For instance, a user.ebay@incamail.com mailbox would include links to various eBay services and features.

Sheldon said this is in direct response to recent industry data that found that average online users spend the majority of their time with e-mail.

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Still, while DEAs appear a viable solution to the nagging spam problem, adoption has been stalled because people are largely inclined not to pay for premium e-mail services, such as those offered by Yahoo!, will not invest the time to learn how to use DEA services properly, and would simply rather muddle through, or dump their account altogether.

An October 2002 study by ReturnPath and NFO WorldGroup found 16 percent of respondents actually abandoned their e-mail addresses to escape spam.

Susan Bratton, vice president of marketing for Mailblocks, an anti-spam service that offers disposable addresses, told *internetnews.com* that just 34 percent of the company's "very mainstream" customers use DEAs. For many, the learning curve is too steep, she said.

While Sheldon is hesitant to provide specific adoption projections and won't discuss partner opportunities, he did say the plan for Incmail's subscriber base is to be in the millions within the next few years. Considering the company's business model -- while it is hard to beat the marketability of a free price point -- Incmail will likely need a substantial user base to be viable.

To accomplish this, Sheldon said Incmail plans to drive revenue from several sources, including third-party relationships with online retailers and service providers, advertising customized to the mailbox categories, sponsorships, and revenue derived from services offered via Incmail's so-called Vertical E-mail Portals.

During 2004, Incmail will launch portals focused on common online activities, including: online auction management, sharing and printing digital photographs, organization of news alerts and seamless integration of e-mail with blogging.

Sheldon would not comment on whether he's in discussions with any major online players, or if he plans to pursue larger online providers to incorporate Incmail into their services.

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