

Phorum Support Forums / Phorum Hack/Mod Requests

Anti-Bot Modification for Phorum

MrMike / January 18, 2009 12:54AM

[Anti-Bot Modification for Phorum](#)

I apologize in advance if this isn't the correct forum to post this in; it seemed the most applicable one that I saw.

Due to the rather aggressive increase in bot activity that I've seen across many of my forums, I've developed some "bot buster" code and I'm offering it to the Phorum community (and several of the other major message boards as well).

I've bundled up a drop-in BotBuster mod for Phorum that people are welcome to use. Technically it's not 100% "drop-in", but it's very, very close. It's all self-contained in one file, requires NO database modifications, and should require only one minor edit to the registration file. (You'll also want to set a couple of very simple configuration options in the BotBuster file, but that's it.)

It uses the [www.BotScout.com] API to check registration emails and reject known bots. Because it uses the BotScout API you don't have to host anything, change your database, or do any complicated modifications to your code. BotScout.com keeps a list of emails, IPs, and user names that bots use and makes them available through a simple API (as well as manual searches).

Full Disclosure:

I'm the owner/operator of www.BotScout.com. What we do is trap bots by using a large number of "bot honeypot" forms located on a bunch of our sites. We then publish that information so people can use it to screen registration attempts. smile

I've included configuration options for SMF, VBulletin, phpBB, Phorum, PunBB, Invision Power Board, FUDForum, Ikonboard, Snitz, and W-Agora. It seems to work fine and it can be used on virtually any kind of forum, contact page, or web form.

The code and a ReadMe file are available for download here: <http://www.botscout.com/code.htm> (click the "Download BotScout BotBuster ver. 1.10" link) If you use it I'd love to hear about it.

If anyone would like to write up specific installation instructions for Phorum, I'll gladly include it in the ReadMe.txt file.

Also, if anyone would like to create a Phorum-specific mod or plugin using the BotScout API, I'd be very interested in helping and would be happy to publish the code or a link to the mod on the BotScout site. The API is simple and easy-to-use, and the API details can be found here: <http://www.botscout.com/api.htm>.

MrMike

[\[www.BotScout.com\]](http://www.BotScout.com)

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 01/18/2009 01:09AM by MrMike.

MrMike / January 21, 2009 12:49AM

[Re: Anti-Bot Modification for Phorum](#)

Hmmm, little or no interest in this, apparently. I'm kind of surprised (and a little disappointed).

The folks from Snitz Forums, phpBB, SMF, PunBB, and FUDForum have all contributed code or written a mod for BotScout.

Someone that still uses W-Agora even contacted us and gave us some assistance in modifying the code and

installation instructions in the generic BotScout code package to make sure it worked with the W-Agora forum.

Is there nobody here that's interested in making this work with Phorum? Or at least testing it see if the generic code works?

Mike

[\[BotScout.com\]](http://BotScout.com)

Edited 1 time(s). Last edit at 01/21/2009 12:50AM by MrMike.

Maurice Makaay / January 21, 2009 02:22AM

[Re: Anti-Bot Modification for Phorum](#)

I guess that the check in our Spam Hurdles module already are quite sufficient in fighting bots. Your system could be an extra hurdle in that module, but you might be presenting it too early (read: there's no big bot problem for Phorum, so our users are not on the lookout for another bot fighting feature).

I'm not sure why you are disappointed. There are a lot of cool things to do for Phorum and in the light of my first paragraph, at this moment other projects get higher priority than integrating the bot fighting system. Also, your post kind of suggests a working solution and it is posted in the modules forum. You did not post a module request. By doing so, you imply that this is running working code already.

Nice to hear that some other forums have adopted your idea and turned it into a module. Good for you. Don't automatically expect that every project team will jump on BotScout to implement it though. Just keep up a good service and one day we might add it to Spam Hurdles.

Maurice Makaay

Phorum Development Team

[my blog](#) [linkedin profile](#) [secret sauce](#)

MrMike / January 21, 2009 04:08AM

[Re: Anti-Bot Modification for Phorum](#)

Quote

Maurice Makaay

I guess that the check in our Spam Hurdles module already are quite sufficient in fighting bots. Your system could be an extra hurdle in that module, but you might be presenting it too early (read: there's no big bot problem for Phorum, so our users are not on the lookout for another bot fighting feature).

If you don't have a a lot of deployments and/or traffic, you probably don't need it. The forums like SMF and phpBB are very widespread so they see a lot more traffic overall and that's probably why it's more of an issue for them.

Quote

Maurice Makaay

Also, your post kind of suggests a working solution and it is posted in the modules forum. You did not post a module request. By doing so, you imply that this is running working code already.

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My apologies if I didn't communicate clearly- it is indeed working code, and can be used in Phorum by using the generic code that's available on the BotScout site. We were hoping someone here might have an interest in creating a plugin specific to Phorum. If that's not the case, no problem.

Quote

Maurice Makaay

Nice to hear that some other forums have adopted your idea and turned it into a module. Good for you. Don't automatically expect that every project team will jump on BotScout to implement it though.

We're not expecting anything, and if there's little or no interest from the Phorum community we won't spend any more time on it. We're quite happy with the response from the more mainstream forum communities at this point, so we'll skip any development for Phorum for the time being. If you'd like to look at integrating it in the future, please feel free to contact us and we'll look at putting it on the list.

Quote

Maurice Makaay

Just keep up a good service and one day we might add it to Spam Hurdles.

Don't bother, it sounds like you're good with what you have now. We'll let the more heavily trafficked forum sites run with it; their wider usage and larger installed client base is probably why it's more of an issue for them. Have a nice day, Maurice, and hang in there with Phorum.

Joe Curia / January 21, 2009 05:21AM

[Re: Anti-Bot Modification for Phorum](#)

I appreciate any work done to fight spammers, but I do not appreciate poorly hidden attacks on a well developed forum software. Maurice was kind when he suggested that you keep up a good service. As far as I can see you are just starting a service which has not yet proved itself. I would suggest that you consider the ephemeral nature of web services and look at the long standing nature of Phorum before taking the snidely superior stance you seem to have adopted.

Joe Curia (aka Azumandias)

Modules:	Admin Mass Email	Automatic Time Zones	Enhanced Custom
Profiles	Google Calendar	Post Previews	
	Admin Security Suite	Check Modules for Upgrades	External
Authentication	Group Auto-Email	Private Message Alerts	
	Attachment Download Counter	Custom Attachment Icons	Favorite Forums
	Highlighted Search Terms	Self-Delete Posts Option	
	Attachment Watermarks	Custom Language Database	Forum Lockdown
	Ignore Forums	Threaded Tree View	
	Automatic Message Pruning	Easy Color Scheme Manager	Forum Subscriptions
	Moderated User Group		
Templates:	Generic Integration	Simple Rounded	Tabbed Emerald

MrMike / January 21, 2009 06:24AM

[Re: Anti-Bot Modification for Phorum](#)

Quote

Joe Curia

I appreciate any work done to fight spammers, but I do not appreciate poorly hidden attacks on a well developed forum software.

I am in no way attacking Phorum, but I find it curious that you would perceive my comments that way. I'm not sure what I said that consider to be a "hidden attack", but I assure you that what I say, I say openly and without the need for subterfuge. If I don't like something, rest assured, you'll know it. :)

Quote

Joe Curia

Maurice was kind when he suggested that you keep up a good service.

Indeed. I am basking in his praise, lol.

Quote

Joe Curia

As far as I can see you are just starting a service which has not yet proved itself.

Absolutely true, and I would be the first one to say so. Although we've been trapping bots and collecting their signatures for some time, the service itself is recently launched. So, no disagreement there, Joe, and I didn't claim otherwise.

Quote

Joe Curia

I would suggest that you consider the ephemeral nature of web services and look at the long standing nature of Phorum before taking the snidely superior stance you seem to have adopted.

I'm quite familiar with the "ephemeral nature of web services", as I've been a web developer for some time now. I've owned and operated a wide variety of sites over the last ten years; indeed, I may have had more fail than you've started.

As for the "long standing nature of Phorum", this is a two-sided coin. I was an early adopter of Phorum quite a few years ago, and I ran lots of message boards with it. This was one of the reasons I came here- I was hoping for some participation with and from the Phorum community, as I remembered it fondly from my past experiences with it.

That said, I must also be frank- the pace of development for Phorum was slow compared to many other forums, and the lack of comparable features eventually forced me to abandon it in favor of other forum software that was more mature, robust, and more developed.

Personally I *like* Phorum (seriously), but it lacks features, add-ons, and configurability compared to phpBB, SMF, Snitz or even FUDForum. For the last few years I've more or less standardized on SMF due to its features, configurability, and the extensive assortment of add-ons and skins. The SMF user community is also a lot of fun and very responsive, and I appreciate that as a developer. But hey, different people like different things. Some people swear by phpBB, but it's not my cup of tea.

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No, not everyone needs all the features of SMF or phpBB, but as an end user and a webmaster I can tell you that's it's far better to have a feature and not need it than to need a feature and not have it.

I didn't come here to bash Phorum, and I'm sure my comments won't be received very well, but it is what it is. I came here because I wanted to provide a (possibly) useful service that Phorum could make use of, but if it's not necessary, appropriate, or worthwhile, that's okay too. It's a big intarweb with lots of choices and opportunities. But as I said before, if at a future date you're interested in doing something with it, please let me know and I'll be glad to work with you and/or the Phorum community.

headchopperz / January 27, 2009 12:17AM

[Re: Anti-Bot Modification for Phorum](#)

sweet looks awsome im gona have to download =)
ill post back with my review

MrMike / January 28, 2009 01:47AM

[Re: Anti-Bot Modification for Phorum](#)

Quote

headchopperz

sweet looks awsome im gona have to download =)
ill post back with my review

If you have any difficulty installing it or getting it to work, please let me know and I'll be glad to help. You're the first Phorum user that I'm aware of and I'd like to do everything I can to make sure that we support the Phorum message board. I'll try and check the forum here from time to time, but you can also reach us directly though the contact form on the BotScout site if you need to.

pboulerie / April 17, 2014 05:41PM

[Re: Anti-Bot Modification for Phorum - BotScout](#)

It looks interesting.

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