

Where in the World Did This Come From?

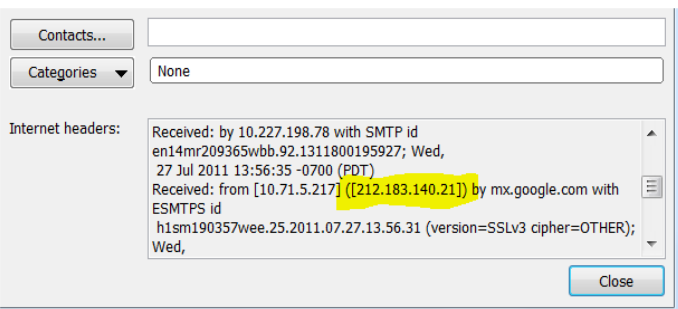
It is important to know where your clients and prospects are located. This can become a challenge if all you have is an email address, which increasingly is the case with many companies who lure us in with the promise of a white paper, newsletter, free webinar or what have you. The 'net is a fabulous place to find free stuff, and an easy place to give it away. It's a bit harder to get sign-ups to provide you with much more than the email, which is hard enough to capture accurately, assuming it's a real one.

One interesting tactic is to ask a sign-up to verify that their email address is correct. They sign up, thus opting in, and you send a confirmation address with a link back which they must acknowledge. In short, a "double opt-in". A "reply" to that acknowledgement email puts a target on the sending link in the Internet. It gives you the numerical address to the ISP server which your prospect is using.

This at least gives you a country and most likely a city. The trick is to extract from the "header" information in the incoming email from the client, and then to use one or more of the resources which geolocate that server.

Here's how to do this.

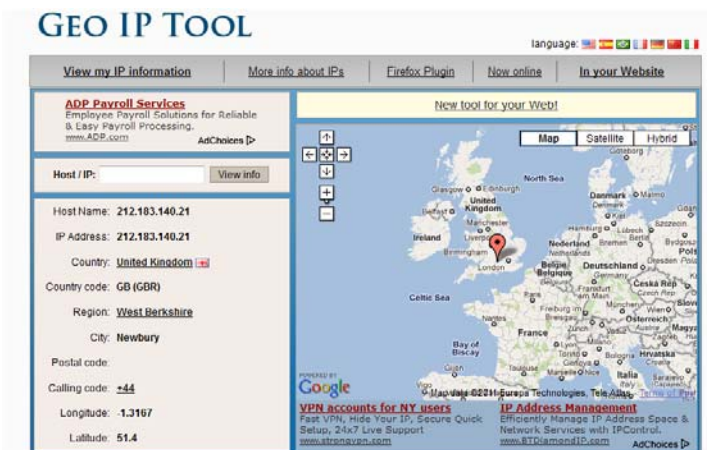
The screen capture below shows the "header" in an email we received from the Editor of the UK postal website Hellmail. (Yes, Steve gave us permission to use this.) While other email programs are no doubt differently constructed, if you use Out-



look, you can find this information by opening the email and clicking "Options" on the toolbar at the top of the page and you immediately get this view.

Note that I've trimmed the actual view. This is only the bottom half of the Options display, but it has the meat for our purposes, which I have highlighted. Copy this set of numbers and go to one of the many websites which offer geolocation mapping of IP addresses, such as www.geomaplookup.net, or <http://www.geoiptool.com/en/online/>.

You may have to geolocate a few of the IP addresses you find in the header before you end up with the originating server. In this email the first one (10.71...) turns out to be our receiving server about 30 miles away from the office. The originating server is the highlighted address, which is in the UK, as shown by this map generated by GeoIPTool.



We've noticed that some of these sites will only map a few IP addresses before the map becomes inoperative. So you may need to use a handful of those vendors you find in Google if you are doing a lot. Many of them have software which can be licensed to accomplish this sort of thing automatically.

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If you suspect you have Canadian visitors on your email list and want to treat them with softer kid gloves, given the new anti-spam law's penalties, this may be worthwhile investigating. Or you might ask your outside data processing firm to look into it for you.

The experience of searching the intermediate stops between the originating server and your own can be both amusing and unsettling. This particular message bounced off 2 servers in the UK before crossing the Atlantic to go through Google's server on the West coast, a server in "Herndon, Virginia", and then to me. Herndon is where the National Security Administration is located.

Finally, one of the better articles on this subject on the Internet is this one: <http://www.codeproject.com/KB/HTML/Geo-Locate-Incoming-Email.aspx>. The article also describes how to "spoof" an address so the receiver cannot track back to you.. How effective this might be to prevent "Herndon" being able to do that is another question entirely.

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Merry Law is recognized worldwide as the most authoritative voice in the business of international address formats and commercial mailing optimization. Her advice is sought by mailers around the world, and she regularly participates as an invited expert in postal and mailing industry meetings and advisory boards in the US and abroad.

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