

Life Hacker on Email Communication

Intro to email

- Email effects true communication
- Most effective for sharing basic information, ie. new procedures, guidelines etc.
- Meant to be impersonal and efficient
- Can not and should not replace other forms of communication

Email General Guidelines

- Successful people don't send long email
- Use the subject line to make the purpose clear
- People don't need as much background information as you think they do
- Keep it professional and brief
- Just because your email is short, that doesn't mean it has to be rude.
- Don't make folks wait to acknowledge receipt

Why email is difficult to manage – cross post from BBC

- Underlying subtext – someone is interested in what I have to say
- An irregular reward – not always something there so we have to check more often to see if we got something
- Thrilling when there are small amounts of new things...less thrilling when there is a deluge...if email was cached and sent in larger batches it would be better for us...
- Reciprocity – one positive action deserves another
- Responsibility pressure – someone sent me something...I should respond (not necessarily)

Taming your inbox (when your inbox is out of control)

- Unsubscribe
- Find and Delete – search for all email from a sender, select all and archive
- Email Game
- Put your email on Autopilot
 - Use tools that keep your inbox clean – Unroll.me/theswizzle
 - Use Filters and rules
 - Get a system that works for you
 - Stop using email like a filing cabinet
 - Decide what the message is
 - Decide what must be done

- Do what must be done
 - Delete /archive the message
- Change your email settings to check for email every X many hours
- Set an auto-reply for internal mail – got it but am working on a project and can't respond just now, call if this is urgent.

Cleaning out your Inbox in an hour

- Work in offline mode when sitting down to clean out your inbox – that way you can't get distracted by look at links – works well for Outlook Client
- Don't reply to anyone – just flag stuff that needs reply
- Resort by sender – you can get rid of a multiple messages quickly.
- Use a filing system that works for you – not just something someone else suggested
- Be ruthless about deleting – most things just don't need to be kept

Manage Your inbox (check your processes)

- [Send less email](#)
 - Is the email absolutely necessary?
 - Is email the best medium?
- Mark as unread things that you need to return to later
- Start the day addressing unread emails from the previous day for 1 hour -- [Yesterbox](#)
- Establish and stick to email rules and routines (ie. 1hr in the morning and then 30 minutes at lunch and then 1 hour at 4pm)
- Turn on auto response: Hello! Thanks for your email. I'll get to it during my morning 'internet ablutions' (as William Gibson would put it). If you need a quicker response than asynchronous communication can provide, please do consider one of the following (in order of preference):
- Be precise with words especially in email
- Use To and CC appropriately – who do you want to take action and who are you just keeping in the loop? Don't send out email "to" multiple people unless you want to deal with multiple responses
- Acknowledge receipt – otherwise you'll probably get an additional email asking the same thing with other folks included
- Take combustible stuff offline – email is not the only means of communication that we have and is certainly not the best for sensitive or intricate issues. Pick up the phone. Have a face to face conversation.

Stress Free Professional email (keeping it going)

- Your inbox and how you deal with it must reflect your professional goals and priorities, so think about the order in which you deal with it.
 1. Messages that you are the “to”
 2. Messages to the team list “it_trt”
 3. Messages to the teams that we interact with “it_tss”; “it_mail”
 4. Everything else
- Do not keep “to do” items in your email. Get a real to-do list
- "If the Next Action can be done in 2 minutes or less, do it when you first open the item up. Even if that item is not a "high priority" one, do it now if you're ever going to do it at all.

Email Challenges

- No Email Fridays
- Email Fridays
 - Email is distracting
 - Most email doesn't matter
 - Batching is magical
 - Parkinson's law – work expands to fill the time available
 - Creating “space” will help you be balanced
- 5 Sentences

Resources

- <http://five.sentenc.es/>
- <https://www.theswizzle.com/> – Organizes your inbox...Unsubscribe and collect subscriptions into a daily digest from one place.
- <https://unroll.me/> - similar to the swizzle –they seem to be a proxy for your email and to read the digest email you have to go to their website. It also makes some decisions for you and may mistakenly add an email to the digest when it really should be personal.
- <https://mailstrom.co/> - sorts and categorizes your email so that you can make decisions on how to deal with it (subscription based, to let it handle issues for you, but you can use it to look at patterns in your email and then create rules yourself)
- Mailbox- iOS app for Gmail
- <http://emailga.me/> - The Email Game – Gamification of email – process your email to earn points etc.