



How to manage E-mail

Can e-mail be more gain than pain? With stress levels rising as the Inbox fills up, what can you do personally and in your organisation?

1. **Decide when to check e-mails**

Check e-mails periodically rather than continually. Turn off 'new e-mail' alerts and decide when to check for new mail. For some people once or twice a day will be sufficient; others may need to check every two hours. The stress and inefficiency of responding to every new email as it arrives should be obvious – batch opening is more efficient and less stressful.

2. **Delete – deal – delay**

Emails are best managed by the 3D rule:

- Delete anything irrelevant, out-of-date, redundant or simply rubbish
- Deal with emails that need a quick response and file as necessary in the right email folder, or delegate by forwarding to the right person
- Delay in reaction or reply if it will take time or research –set up a #Pending folder which can be opened later (the # sign puts it at the top of the folders list).

3. **Use abbreviations in the Subject line**

It helps everyone if they know immediately if an email is for information (FYI), for action (FYA), a response to something previous (RES) or just a quick message (QM) written in the subject line.

4. **Use Attachments sparingly**

Use hyperlinks to documents if they are on the shared network drive, rather than attach. It ensures each recipient accesses the same version of the document. If it's not on the network, large documents should be zipped up (compressed) and small documents may be better pasted into the body of the email itself.

5. **Create a weekly e-bulletin**

So many inboxes get cluttered with the circular emails sent to everyone. A weekly e-bulletin which collates as much as possible is not as big a task as it may seem. Or use the intranet.

6. **Use Message options**

Learn about options available when sending messages, especially time-expiry so that it never reaches people's Inbox if it's irrelevant after a certain time e.g. warning of Fire Alarm Test or missing item.

7. **Give people training in good email practice**

It is easy to assume that everyone knows how to use email. It may not even be checked as part of induction. People need to know how to set up new folders so they can organise their emails systematically and how to integrate Mail with Calendar and Tasks. Bring in external trainers to run workshops if necessary or use on-line courses.

In summary:

- Resist checking emails continually
- Respond with the 3D rule – delete, deal or delay
- Use Subject line abbreviations, hyperlinks and message options
- Provide e-mail training

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