

Productive to the Max

Productivity

Performance

Profitability

Focus on a System

MaxTips! October 2008

Create a folder entitled " Archived e-mails." (Use the underscore to make sure that folder is the first one on top of your list). Transfer all of the emails that are presently in your inbox to that folder. Just select all and drag over. WAIT! WAIT! WAIT! voila! An empty inbox!!!. Heave a sigh of relief as you experience white space for the first time in ages.

Construct an electronic filing cabinet, much like the physical cabinets you have, with electronic folders with category names. Label them according to your work projects, team members, staff and reference items. The folders should mirror your paper filing system. Those folders that you use regularly can be preceded by an underscore, letter or number so they come up on top of your listing and can be accessed easily.

Update your contact and e-mail address book.

For all current information received in to your new, empty inbox, set up a regular time for sorting, deleting and transferring to the proper files. Plan regular times on your calendar, 3 or 4 times per day to access your inbox. If you are in a position that requires you to look at the email on a regular basis, do so a few times per hour but just "cherry pick" those things that are important to action and leave the others in the inbox. Continue to plan regular times on your calendar to access your inbox and deal with the other emails that require action.

During these planned times, take your emails ONE AT A TIME in the order that they appear in the inbox. Do not cherry pick, jump, and look for the jokes or the more interesting emails. Decide To Do (if the action will only take a few minutes), Delete, Send on to others, File (you have already set up those folders) or Action. For action items there are several choices:

- Drag to an "action" or " to do" folder, plan it out on your calendar or tasks and access that folder when you are working on the task.
- Drag the actual email to the calendar and plan time to deal with the item. When you open the calendar at that time and date, the actual email will show in the calendar

box. It will also remain in your inbox so you can drag it to a file folder. This does not work for emails with attachments.

- If the action item requires a long period of time to complete, plan several dates in your calendar to finish it.

At the end of your planned "email time" your inbox will be empty! Congratulations. Remove the beeps, bells, whistles and reminders. Turn off the email program when you are not using it and get on with your tasks until the next planned email time.

Now that you have established a new and efficient system- go to your calendar and plan regular times to deal with the old archived emails that you originally dragged over. Remember that you cannot do it all in one session. Plan many sessions of short duration and reward yourself after each one. Use the current new system to deal with them and in no time, that archived folder will be empty.

1. Get rid of all the old information that is no longer useful.
2. Delete information that can easily be obtained elsewhere.
3. Determine whether you would like to keep some documents in another electronic format such as word.
4. Vow that you will never leave the office at the end of the day without an empty inbox.

Once you have dealt with the old archived e-mail folder, you will have already trained yourself in a proper system for current e-mails. No more backlog! No more clutter! No more inability to access information instantly. People will not recognize the new you!!!