10 ways to eliminate e-mail overload

10. Cancel subscriptions to unwanted mailing lists, and opt-out of LEGITIMATE e-zines. Be careful! Trying to opt-out of spam e-mails will only alert the sender they have a LIVE address. Also make sure you are careful to click "unsubscribe" or "opt out" when purchasing items online.

9. Ask your friends to remove you from joke groups and chain messages. Simply explain your situation, and if they are good friends, they will take you out of their distribution list.

8. Don't post your e-mail on websites. Spammers will find it via Google and put it on their lists.

7. Don't respond to every e-mail you receive. Yes, it's OK to NOT respond to some e-mails. If it's a group e-mail, don't respond with "okay" or ":)" – it's not necessary unless the sender is specifically asking you a question or requesting information.

6. Be succinct. Restrict your messages to a few sentences. If you can't, pick up the phone or talk in person! This will avoid the back and forth of e-mail conversation.

5. Take advantage of the subject line. If possible, put your question in the subject line of your message. If that's not possible, make your subject line very descriptive so the recipient knows what your message is about. Here's another tip; create a set of codes with coworkers and place them in the subject line to help them process and prioritize messages. For example, use "FYI", "AR" (Action required) or "URG" (urgent messages).

4. Block time to answer your e-mail and fight the temptation to check your e-mail every few minutes. You will save yourself a ton of time and be far more productive.

3. Respond to messages when you open them so you only read them once. If the e-mail requires an action step, schedule the action step and delete it from your inbox.

2. Set aside time in the morning and evening to process your inbox. Shoot for a completely empty inbox. File messages you need to keep and set reminders for messages requiring follow-up.

1. Consider getting another e-mail address from one of the free e-mail providers (such as G-Mail), and use your gmail.com address when buying products or purchasing services online, or when asked to provide your e-mail address to a merchant. Keep your primary e-mail strictly for real human beings.

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