Email Killing Your Productivity? Here Are 9 Ways to Fight Back.

Email is both indispensable and a huge time suck.
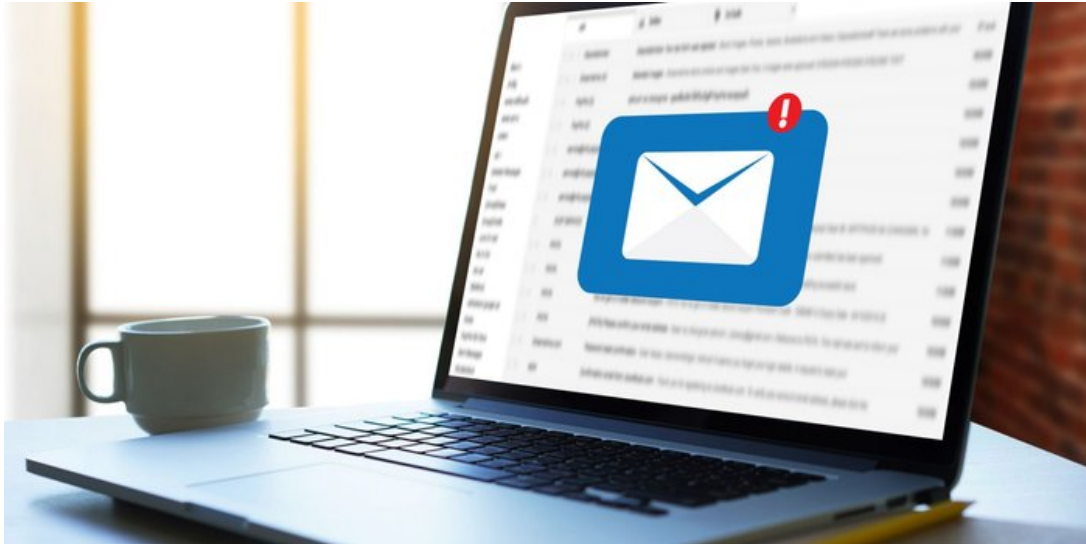
John Rampton
VIP CONTRIBUTOR
Entrepreneur and Connector
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One hundred twenty-six. That's how many emails are expected to be sent and received per business worker, per day, in 2019. Even more startling? We spend 28 percent of our work week on emails. That comes out to more than 11 hours per week.

While intended to be a productivity tool, for most people, email is a serious distraction that prevents them from getting more important work done. Consider that whenever you stop working on a task to check your inbox, it's going to take you 23 minutes to get back on track. If you're the type of person who instinctively opens an email whenever you receive a notification -- how can you possibly get anything accomplished?

The good news is that email doesn't have to kill your productivity as long as you take the following steps.

1. Avoid your inbox first thing in the morning and when you're "off the clock."

It's tempting to reach for your phone as soon as the alarm goes off and start going through your emails. It's equally addicting to check your messages as soon as you receive a notification -- even if it's late at night or when you're on vacation. The problem with this process is that it lets others know that you're at their beck and call. It also keeps you thinking about the constant flow of emails throughout the day and night.

Your mornings should be spent reflecting on your priorities, creating lists for the day and working on your most meaningful task. This ensures that you're not focused on other people's demands and requests.

2. Empty your inbox daily.

You don't need to stress out about answering each and every email. However, as Michael Hyatt explains, "it does mean that you have *processed* every message." You can achieve this goal by using the following method:

- **Do.** If it's actionable and takes under two minutes, then do the task ASAP.
- **Delegate.** This doesn't mean passing your responsibilities to someone else. It's forwarding the right tasks to the right people.
- **Defer.** It the email isn't urgent, you can reply to the message at a better time.
- **Delete.** Emails that are neither important or you can delegate -- should be sent to the trash.
- **File.** Does the message contain information you'll need in the future? Add it to your archives so you can refer to it later.

3. Stop CC'ing everyone at work.

Several years ago at a previous gig, my boss was notorious for CC'ing the entire staff. Sometimes this was necessary, but more often than not, my inbox was bombarded with replies that had absolutely nothing to do with me.

Because of this experience, I've made it point not to CC my entire team and only email the relevant parties -- usually consisting of no more than two people. I'll email everyone If there's information my team needs to be aware of . However, I will ask them to respond to me individually instead of using the reply-to-all button.

4. Check your email in batches.

According to Jocelyn Glei, author of *Unsubscribe,* there are two types of emailers. The first is the "reactors, who rely on notifications and near-constant monitoring of their inboxes to nibble away at their email throughout the day." The second is the "batchers, who set aside specific chunks of time to power through their email so they can ignore it the rest of the day."

"Not surprisingly, batchers are significantly more effective when it comes to getting things done," add Glei. Additionally, research shows that they're less stressed as well. If you're struggling to set firm boundaries on when to check your inbox, turn off your notifications until it's time. Timothy Ferris, for example, only responds to emails twice a day.

5. Leverage your staff and email management tools.

One of the easiest ways to protect your time, while preventing your inbox from getting out-of-control, is by having someone screen your messages. This way they can separate the important messages from those that don't deserve your immediate attention. If money is a concern you can hire a virtual assistant to handle this job.

Another option would be to use tools like Sanebox or Unroll.me. Sanebox, for instance, sorts and declutters your inbox so that only important emails come through. All other messages are archived or trashed. With Unroll.me, you can unsubscribe from those subscription emails that are a nuisance.

6. Create a new operating model for your organization's emails.

This is a great point from Allison Davis in an Inc piece. If you want "to make the entire experience better, you need to work with your colleagues (in your department, your larger group or even your whole organization) to agree on a new operating model for email." According to Davis, this should include;

- **Knowing when to email vs. communicating in other ways.** For example, for group communication, you may want to use a project management tool or call a brief meeting. Instead of going back-and-forth in a lengthy thread, pick up the phone or schedule a one-on-one conversation.
- **Embracing other platforms for collaborating and communicating.** Again, use project management software to keep track of projects. Use internal

messaging services like Slack and Yammer if you need to connect with your team quickly.
- **Ban "reply all."** If you do this, your colleagues will follow suit.
- **Share email productivity tips.** If you've found a way to successfully keep your inbox in check, don't keep this information to yourself. Share it with your team so that they can manage their inboxes.

7. Fine-tune your email etiquette.

Rose Leadem explains in a previous article for Calendar, that having superb email etiquette will help you "get more done, expand your network and ultimately, be successful." To mind your Ps and Qs, here's where you should start:

- **Have a clear and specific subject line.** Messages without a subject often get overlooked. More importantly, it lets the recipient know what the email is exactly about without opening it.
- **Always be a professional.** Never write with emotion or overuse exclamation marks. Furthermore, make sure that the message is scannable and easy-to-read. Remember, you're not writing a novel. Use numbers or bullets to highlight your main points.
- **Proofread.** Before you hit send, double check that there aren't any spelling or grammatical errors. But, only take a micro-second to do your scan. A quick read will also give you a chance to make sure that the message makes sense to avoid any misunderstandings -- and maybe cut out a few extra words or sentences.
- **Include a call-to-action.** Conclude the email with a strong CTA so that the other party knows what steps you are asking them to take next. With a clear direction, they won't have to respond with a series of follow-up questions. Calendly. a great tool to help with booking call to actions at the end of an email.
- **Add a signature with your contact information.** If the recipient needs to contact you, your signature ensures that they have this information without having to ask for it.

8. Delay your responses.

This may sound obvious, but we often respond to messages as soon as they arrive. You suppose that in this way you'll receive an email back much faster. Instead, discipline yourself to wait to respond to your messages. This could be an hour, a day, or whenever you have made your schedule to manage your inbox.

If you're worried that you'll forget to respond, you can use your email program's delayed delivery feature. This allows you to compose your message, but it won't be sent until later. If you're anxious about emergencies -- I can tell you that you won't be emailed. You're going to receive a fury of phone calls or knocks on your office door.

9. Try "Yesterbox."

This was a method created by Tony Hsieh and I'm a big advocate. In a nutshell, you only respond to yesterday's emails -- unless they're urgent. As Hsieh writes, "If it can wait 48 hours without causing harm, then you are not allowed to respond to any emails that come in today, even if it's a simple one-word reply."