Organizing Email Made Easy

Organizing email is another one of those tasks that you just have to do. If organizing email isn't made a priority you will find yourself with thousands of emails in your inbox and no way to find what you want when you need it. In fact, organizing email is one of the easiest tasks to put off because the mess doesn't accumulate on your desk. Technologies are supposed to save us time, money and stress. Yet how many of you dread the onslaught of email and voicemail upon returning from a vacation? Gone are the days when someone else answers your phone and opens your mail while you're away resting and relaxing.

Here are some quick tips for managing and organizing email:

1. **Make decisions quickly.** After you read an email, you should be able to perform one of the following actions: Reply, Delete, File, Forward, or Schedule. If you make a decision on each email and then act on that decision, you'll be less likely to have Inbox Clutter.
2. **Use the Delete Key.** And use it often. The most common mistake people make is saving too many emails. Granted, many emails warrant being spared deletion, but not *every* email needs to be saved. If you are copied on an email simply as a courtesy or formality, use good judgment on whether or not it truly needs to be saved. If an email contains an important attachment, take extra care to save the attachment before deleting the email.
3. **Create Email File Folders.** Whether you are organizing email in Yahoo!, Outlook or another email management program, each has an email file folder system that allows you to create folders. Use these to categorize your saved messages. Folders make message retrieval and current project management easier. If you're new to Email File Folders, start out with some basic ones such as:
   - To Read
   - Must do Next Week/Month
   - Personal
   - Pending
   - Project XYZ

Email file folders help you to quickly sort your Inbox and manage the messages that are truly necessary to keep. If your email has an attachment, it will stay with the email if you choose to click and drag it into an email file folder.

4. **Pick up the phone.** Before email, people picked up the telephone or walked to a person's office to get the information they needed. Here's a great tip: If you're anticipating a string of emails on a situation and really don't want that particular interruption, pick up the phone instead. What could take 6-8 rounds of emails can easily be tackled in a 30-second phone conversation. This will help ease the amount of time organizing email takes from you.
5. **Separate personal from work.** Reading and responding to personal emails while at work wreaks havoc with workplace productivity. Save your personal email for when you're at home. Give your friends and family members a separate email address and keep your work email identification strictly for business. Designate a separate email address to handle any electronic newsletters you subscribe to. When it's time to catch up on your reading, all newsletters will be located at the same address.

Email is a tool that is here to stay. As with any technology, it will continue to evolve, be updated and improve. Mastering, managing and organizing email now will serve you well in the future.

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