

Using Email Efficiently

Mismanaged email is mismanaged time. “Where did the day go?” is undoubtedly one of the most used expressions as 6 p.m. rolls around and owner-managers review the issues that did not get taken care of during the day. The demand on an owner-manager’s time comes from all sides whether government, employees, suppliers or customers. It sometimes seems that the longer you are in business the more demands are made on your time. The solution is not necessarily to work longer hours but rather to use time more efficiently.

One of the best ways to make better use of your time is to reduce the amount of the day spent answering email.

Reduce Personal Email

The working world cannot do without email. Unfortunately, many colleagues and friends use business email to send us pictures, jokes or articles. While many of these may indeed be entertaining, reading them is a huge waste of time. The best way to handle this traffic is not to open them at all and to ask colleagues to limit emails to work-related issues.

Pavlov’s Dog

Don’t respond to every email the moment you hear the “ding.” If you choose to respond, the current task has to be put aside; if you choose to read it but not answer, the time spent is doubled because you will have to read it again when you respond later. The best way to avoid fragmenting your time is to review email in batches at set times.

Keep Responses Brief

Try to keep your response to three sentences or less. If it requires more, you should probably write an attachment.

When using “RE:” in the subject line, define the issue being addressed. For instance, if the received email is asking whether you can attend a budget meeting, ensure the response indicates exactly what your email is about. State “Attendance at budget meeting” and the contents would be “Cannot attend budget meeting on November 1.” Direct and specific wording prevents assumptions and misunderstandings.

Define the Topic

Subject lines should be simple and clearly identify the subject of the email. Poorly written subject lines leave the reader guessing what the email is actually about. If a longer email is necessary, it should not be structured like a detective story with the most important information at the end. Instead, put the key idea in the first paragraph and any supporting argument or data in the second and any subsequent paragraph(s).

Spam

Ensure your server can eliminate it before it gets to your inbox.

Filter

Create a “read later” file for things you want to read but are not urgent. If you have online subscriptions, for example, set up a special file and a “white list”

that lets in only those subscriptions and keeps everything else out. These items can always be reviewed on break.

Don’t Check Your Email First Thing in the Morning

Checking your email when you first begin to work may seem like a great idea. If you already have a busy agenda, however, reading your email can divert you from more important things. If you have the bad luck to open an email that seems urgent, you may not give yourself enough time to consider the subject matter properly.



Use Your Laptop or Desktop for Email

Small keyboards and small screens can make reading, editing or responding to emails and attachments frustrating. Using a smartphone to respond to email enquiries is much more time consuming than using a full-size keyboard and desktop monitor screen.

Direct Messages to Where They’re Needed

Some smartphones may include a proprietary email address that is only accessible, or most convenient to access, from the device. For your business email, either don’t distribute your device email address, or make sure that all messages are forwarded to your main inbox. Constantly checking your smartphone for messages as well as the other devices is needless duplication of effort.

If your job description requires you to respond immediately, consider setting up a second purpose-specific inbox (e.g., webmaster, emergency support, etc.) or mail rules that direct the important email to the smartphone.

Be Specific

The immediacy of email and texting creates disjointed conversation. It often takes four or five emails or text messages to finalize appointment details. To eliminate this chatter, be specific.

Email Metrics

If managing your email saved 10 minutes per day over the course of a 240-day work year, you have found 40 hours, i.e., an entire work week! Not only does controlling communication save time and therefore money, it also keeps you and everybody else focused on the projects at hand.

ASK AN EXPERT

Q What do I (and my clients) need to know about Canada’s new anti-spam law?

A Bill C-28, which takes effect in early 2012, is a regulatory framework for permission-based marketing, including email, social media, text and other electronic messaging. The following best

practices will help you prepare for the legislation:

Get explicit permission to communicate with your contacts. Be sure every email also gives the recipient the option to unsubscribe or opt out.

Let contacts select areas of interest such as newsletters, event notifications or new product announcements when they join your email list.

Clearly post your privacy policy and include your address and phone number in all emails.

Request feedback. Do your emails add value? Is the frequency right? A survey is an inexpensive, easy and immediate way to find out what your customers think about your communications.

Remind recipients why you are emailing them. This will put your email into context and differentiate your communications from unwanted email.

Be current. Ask subscribers for updated info and provide an easy way to change their email addresses.

Monitor your inbox for unsubscribes and complaints and take necessary action right away. If you are losing more than 0.5% of your subscribers per month, look at all the elements of your campaigns and make adjustments where you’re falling short.

ASK AN EXPERT is an excerpt from CA Magazine November 2011 issue and is written by Lisa Kember, Toronto regional director for Constant Contact.

This’n That at Logan Katz

LK in the Community

As the holiday season is approaching, we are reminded of those less fortunate than ourselves. The spirit of giving fills our hearts as we proudly announce the launch of our second annual Holiday Food Drive to support the Ottawa Food Bank!

We encourage all our clients to bring in a donation of non-perishable food or household products on their next visit to our office.

We thank you for your support. Together, we continue to make a difference in our community!

Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund – Ride for Diabetes Research

Logan Katz took part in the annual Ride for Diabetes Research which was held on October 21st. Our two teams raised in excess of \$5,000, thanks to your generosity, and both teams were ranked amongst the top five fundraising teams in Ottawa. Thank you to all for your generosity and support.

October On-Line Poll

The Logan Katz October on-line poll asked whether or not you believe the Ottawa Senators will qualify for the NHL playoffs this year. Our non-scientific results were YES 34.8%; NO 65.2% Visit our website to participate in our monthly polls.