

TRANSFORMING COMBAT ZONES INTO COMFORT ZONES

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Are you finding yourself spending an ever increasing amount of time managing and responding to e-mail? If so, you have plenty of company. An example that was cited in a recent article on the front page of the [June 7th](#) issue of *The New York Times* says it all. The interviewee nearly missed out on a \$1.3 million deal to sell his company because he overlooked an e-mail inquiry and it sat in his in-box for 12 days until he finally saw it. With the deluge of daily e-mail faced by many, it is more important than ever to adopt good habits and procedures that will help reduce the amount of e-mail sent/received as well as the time it takes to respond to a message.

E-mail Stats

Before I share some tips that will enable you to manage your e-mail more productively, here are some noteworthy stats.

1. There were in excess of 80 billion e-mail messages and 200 billion spam messages sent per day in 2009.
2. Business professionals spend 25% of their day processing e-mail.
3. The average in-box contains at least 3,000 messages.
4. The average individual processes 25,000-30,000 messages annually. The time it takes to do so is equivalent to 3-5 months of a typical work year.

Receive Less E-mails

If you send fewer e-mails, you should receive fewer. Here are some questions to ask yourself that can help limit the number of e-mails sent/received.

1. **Does the recipient need the information that I am sending for a specific purpose?** Avoid sending e-mails containing trivial or redundant information. In addition, make a point of thanking people in person instead of via e-mail.

2. **Does my e-mail completely address the questions that have been posed?** Unless it is really necessary to provide a piecemeal response, compile all of the information requested and send it in one e-mail.

3. **Who really needs to receive my e-mail?**

Whenever possible, limit the distribution to the essential few who need to be included. If it is necessary to send the message to a large group, instruct the recipients to reply only to you instead of the entire list. You can then compile the responses and determine the most efficient next step.

4. Do I need a reply?

If no response is required, alert the recipient to this by including NRN (No Reply Needed) at the end of the subject line.

Quality Messages

The best way to improve both your productivity as well as that of your recipient is to structure your messages so that they are both clear and concise.

1. Subject Line

Include the action required, information needed or specific request in the subject line and there won't be any need to include a message in the body of the e-mail. In addition, if you add EOM (end of message) to the end of the subject line, the recipient will know that the e-mail message doesn't need to be opened.

2. Opening Line

Begin your message in the body of the e-mail by clearly defining the reason for the e-mail.

3. Format

Use an easy to read format such as bullets or short paragraphs as you detail all relevant background information.

4. Closing

Clarify any expected next steps at the end of your message.

Outlook Tips

As Outlook is the most commonly used e-mail program, here are some tips to more efficiently use this software. Some of these features may also be incorporated into some of the other frequently used programs.

1. Flagging a Message

The flags can be used on outgoing messages to indicate a required response date or that no response is needed. For messages that are received on a given day, the flags can be used to schedule a time during that day to deal with the e-mail.

2. Create Rules

Rules are sets of instructions that you create so that Outlook can automatically direct certain messages to specific folders. For example, if you receive weekly newsletters from an industry association, all those e-mails can automatically be directed to a specific folder for reviewing at a later date.

3. Color Coding

Assign a color to a specific contact in your address book so that their e-mails will stand out in your in-box. This is especially useful if you are working on a large project and need to respond promptly to e-mails from specific colleagues.

If you need tips for handling a specific e-mail issue, please don't hesitate to [e-mail](#) or call me at 917-375-0631.

Have a productive month!