

Ten Tips for Managing E-mail

Communications meant to enhance productivity often become time-wasters when we receive spam and other meaningless messages along with very important information.

Want to get the most from your E-mail?

- Use Microsoft Outlook to help you effectively manage E-mail. You set rules, and the program automatically manages the messages. If you need help setting and applying rules in Outlook, read <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook/HA010173281033.aspx>.
- Begin the tasks you need to accomplish before checking your E-mail. You won't be distracted from things that must get done.
- Check your messages only three or four times a day. Inform people to contact you some other way if an immediate response is needed.
- Set up the same folders in your E-mail account that you use in your paper action files. As you check your mail, move messages to the appropriate folder.
- Establish a policy within your business that the person who originates a communication is responsible for the retention of that information.
- Messages that require no action on your part can be deleted after reading or after noting on your calendar.
- For a message that requires action, decide who needs to complete the task. If it can be delegated, give the assignment to the appropriate person. If you need to do it, decide the next thing that needs to happen. If you can do it in 2 minutes or less, do it now. If not, print the E-mail and place in a tickler file.
- Use a reference file for information that may be needed in the future.
- Delete ads and jokes. Some E-mails that are forwarded to many people also fall into this category.
- Empty your E-mail inbox on a regular basis. Think of your inbox as a holding place for messages you haven't read yet.

Win the battle with your E-mail! Technology has made it easy to send information to many people at the same time. Don't get distracted...delete. And never underestimate the power of an effective system in conquering digital clutter.