



I visit clients most weeks and talk to several every day. The overwhelming feedback I receive from them is “my inbox is killing me”. Funny choice of words... I don’t remember this Industry offering life saving surgery, or heart and lung transplants? Get a grip; it’s just communication with clients and others in your day-to-day work life. Don’t think emails are in charge of you; fact is you’re in charge of them. Perhaps the problem with your Inbox is a direct consequence of other issues like production management, bad planning or other business processes. The result may be your poor Inbox is the recipient of angry messages, irate customers and the seeds of issues you sow? If this is the case you might need all ten tips to help, or better still step back to the source of the problem rather than the outcome.

email

IS IT YOUR FRIEND OR FOE?

IT’S YOUR CHOICE



No matter how you look at it emails are not going away any time soon. Our way of looking at emails is simply that it is generally better to acknowledge and aim towards taking control of emails, than the impact of not addressing the issues. Yes, good idea? Well, when we conducted the research and reviews of various processes and innovations available in managing emails we discovered the process is easy to implement however, difficult to sustain due to people being conditioned to poor practices and inbred bad habits.

Therefore like many cornerstone innovations and developments in any business – the first issue to address is to answer this simple question – “are you ready to change?” OK, if you’re ready let’s start with an open mind and knowing not every tip will suit every reader. Furthermore looking at the 80/20 principles if we accept 80 percent of the benefits is delivered by only 20 percent of the effort, and maybe if you’re tentative about change just choose the two that suit you best!

There is your action list:

1. Concise, accurate words deliver better results

The written word for many small to medium business people is a daunting task! Many if mmm = not most have been bitten by words not well chosen, even misread or interpreted. The English language is full of time bombs! Even simple speech words like their and there or your and you’re – simply put, words matter! It is well worth considering slowing down and choosing your words carefully in your emails to avoid issues of ambiguity and misinterpretation. Or simply put – getting it right the first time rather than generating a string of to and fro emails potentially endlessly wasting time – sound familiar?

TIP ONE: By being more accurate with your message it will be logical

to assume the less likely subsequent emails will generate problems, or require additional questions seeking further clarity.

2. Send less emails = receive less

Sounds too simple to be true! Maybe you could just try it once? Here is some validation, recently I was in Europe and the UK, totally different time zone, it was so simple when I woke up all of my days emails were waiting for a reply. Many had strings of 3-5 back and forth to other recipients. Looking at the last one of the email string simplified the whole process, in many cases the email had been asked and answered. Potentially I could have added some replies, “would it have mattered?” “could my reply have changed the outcome?”. Well maybe, but if the outcome is good or better then why not leave sleeping dogs lie?

TIP TWO: Think before your conditioning kicks in – ask yourself “do I need to reply right now”.

3. Quality and timely replies save time, and more questions!

Daily we find somewhat endless email strings, which could have been halted by a quality and well timed reply. You may have a tendency to reply too quickly. Consider this, a timely reply even if its a few hours later may well save you and all the cc’d people hours in a day. Whereas quality answers like tip one “concise” that could be as simple as a few well chosen simple words rather an “all good” or even an answer like “OK” when there are 3 – 4 options in the question.

TIP THREE: Ensure you address the email, and in an appropriate timeframe.



TIP SIX: Start each day with time to yourself and plan the day, acknowledging each day is dynamic.

7. Develop a simple rating method

Don't let emails naturally overtake your life. Many new technologies offer instant benefits; this can manifest itself in many ways. The freedom to respond via mobile devices like smart phones and iPads, keeping yourself in the loop or just a need to communicate when needed. These all offer an instant appeal and attraction. However the outcomes can be managed easily, to accept emails as a part of your life. It's simply about choice. The novelty of emails and the self-gratification fades, however your conditioned response may not. Take control of your day. Simple tools in all email programs allow you to flag hot topics – try that? Or just make a simple decision to turn off the beep, look and reply in your time frames not the demands of others.

TIP SEVEN: Open your emails and respond three times a day for a set time frame – and get your life back!!

8. Understand you can delete or unsubscribe eNews

I'm in the business of sending tens of thousands of emails every week – YES it's us! More to the point I actually subscribe myself to maybe 20 – 30 email news feeds. Therefore my Inbox is hammered by 100+ every day, often more. The key to growing knowledge is the opportunity you give yourself to learn. In my case I treat my eNews feeds like a library or newsagent, I browse; sometimes flick through a page then at my choice I read what I want. YES what I want! Like any subscription you are in control.

TIP EIGHT: Know what you like, read what you enjoy and unsubscribe from what you're not enjoying – just remember you can always resubscribe.

9. Build relationships – sometimes

Don't forget the person on the other end of the email is human – like you! Sure this article is about defusing the email time bomb, not turning you into an unfeeling auto-bot! Human niceties may use a moment in time, however its value to both is highly regarded. It's the small thought a welcome thank you or even a caring "how are you, how was your holiday?" is in reality the precious moments robbed from emails by most. It's a value based on who you are and the relationship you have with the client. Perhaps an email with a FYI of a topic you know the recipient is seriously interested in will de-clutter an issue or just show you care?

TIP NINE: There is space in your life to humanise email technology – when appropriate.

10. Think before you send

Yes we have all done it – "the click and regret". Without exception we found our discussion inevitably came to that awful moment of regret. The fall out can include lost friendships, cancelled orders and massive time wasted. There is little doubt how beneficial emails can be, however if used unwisely emails can be very destructive. Remembering the written word is almost an art form and best treated with respect. Choosing your words in an email needs due consideration – you are not in a typical conversation, you don't know what the recipient is undergoing. If you choose to unleash are you certain this moment, your words and actions perceived is prudent?

TIP TEN: Ask yourself if you were face to face would you answer this way, with these words? **BONUS TIP:** Read any highly controversial email ONE more time before you click – is a click going to cost you a friend?

Here is a simple one-question test? "Remembering the 80/20 rule which two of these are you going to action TODAY?" – any of these 10 rules can change the way you enjoy everyday.

Still not sure what needs to be done? Send us an email and ask for our free 'Email policy document and checklist' and start emptying your Inbox and free yourself to control emails now! If you're too busy we can even help, call 02 9660 5428 or email John@controlzone.com.au or go to our web page: www.controlzone.com.au

4. Who and how many cc's

Don't just cc everyone you can think of into an email. Sending to an extra 10 people cc'd into one email may generate 10 replies. Do that 10 times a week and its 100 extra emails in your Inbox.

Understand your own email policy and rules, and stick to them! If you develop and understand your email etiquette stick to it. Here is an

example: if your address is in the TO: - you should reply. If your

address is a CC: treat the email as 'information only and you don't need to reply.

TIP FOUR: Only cc people directly in the loop and who really need to be involved, reducing Inbox activity.

5. Simple replies are OK

Don't always think you need a detailed multi-paragraph reply. Remember tip 1? Concise, therefore when appropriate free yourself from a wordy reply. Read carefully and if you're the direct recipient – sometimes a simple – "Yes, Bob I understand and will commence the project" OR "All clear and understood, thank you" is all you need. This offers courtesy, speeds up the process and builds respect. Keep in mind this can be a problem if the email is open-ended or poorly written.

TIP FIVE: Give yourself time to read slowly and reply in a simple manner

6. Stick to a plan

You already know every day is different – Why? Well, it's the nature of business nowadays, and although we would love to think we are in total control the reality is usually different. Perhaps you need to take control of items in the day that are controllable – emails can be controlled. Maybe a "to do" list or a simple plan to suit you. Even Benjamin Franklin started each day with a plan – will a daily to do list work for you?