

## TIPS TO BEAT EMAIL STRESS

We all know the feeling of being deluged by email. Spend a couple of days out of the office or take a holiday and the size of your inbox multiplies. That's even before dealing with spam.

Worse is the feeling of guilt we feel by not responding to our email quickly. Email was a fantastic invention: have we now let it become a beast which controls us?

Some companies are fighting back. For example, one department at the PC chip maker Intel decided to try "zero email Fridays". They simply turned off email for a day and spoke on the telephone instead. Initial reaction was positive and other companies have tried similar experiments.

But is it realistic to fight the tide of email? Research estimates that computers generate more than 90 billion emails daily (almost half is spam). The number of emails circulating is up five times since 2000. The average senior manager spends several hours each day on their email.

A study in Scotland recently found that more than half of office workers feel stressed out by email. Email harries us into feeling we must respond now. When we check email constantly we tend to lose our train of thought. This makes us less productive and creates more stress.

There are some small steps you can take to manage your email and the stress associated with it. Here are some top tips:

- **Set aside certain times of day** to deal with email (e.g. morning, before lunch and late afternoon). Respond when it suits you. Stick rigidly to this timetable and avoid email "twitching" (continually checking) at all costs.
- **Set up "action folders"** (e.g. "to be reviewed", "for tomorrow", "action within 72 hours" etc) within your email tray.
- More than 50% of emails are sent to people in the same office. **Why not just go and speak to them?** It builds better relationships and provides a welcome break.
- **Delete what you don't need** rigorously. Be strict about what you keep "just in case". Perform weekly clear-outs and inbox spring cleaning. The delete button liberates!
- If your job allows it, try to take a **more relaxed attitude towards email** (not always possible for customer-facing roles). If it's urgent, chances are someone will call anyway.
- **Avoid giving attention to "cc" emails:** if it's important they'll address you directly.
- **Make sure others are aware** when you are out of the office with an automatic message. Leave this on for a while on your return for extra time to clear the backlog.

The bottom line is this: control your email rather than letting it control you!

**Disclaimer.** This article is for general information only. We cannot be held responsible for any actions you might take as a result of it. Please seek medical advice before making any significant change to your habits or lifestyle.