

Conquering Your Inbox

Does opening your inbox fill you with anxiety?

Here's a simple system you can use to take back control of your inbox - and your life.

The Morning Clear Out

Clear out your inbox on your phone (if possible) using the following system.

If you complete this on a laptop or desktop, resist the urge to dig into the "Save for Later" emails for now.

- 1 – Delete** – Clear out the junk first - on your phone if possible. This gives you the opportunity to delete a whole slew of messages without ever having to actually open them. I love the *Edit – Select* feature on my iPhone that allows me to tag the emails I don't need to open and then trash them in one fell swoop.
- 2 – Forward** – If the email came to you, but could or should be handled by someone else in your office, forward it along with a quick note and now it's off of your to do list.
- 3 – Quick Reply** – Answer any emails that only require a short reply and now they're off of your to do list as well.
- 4 – Save for Later** – Anything that will require a longer reply or where checking/gathering additional information is necessary should be saved for when you do get to your desk. However, now that you've seen it, you know what's left in your inbox and will need your attention before the end of the day.

This clear out shouldn't take more than 3-5 minutes to complete.

Avoiding Email “Interruptions”

1 - Hide your Dock & Turn Off Notifications - Keep the chances of being distracted by your inbox at bay by eliminating the “visuals” that will tempt you to “*just check and see if it’s important*” every time a new email comes in.

2 - Decide WHEN - you’re going to check your email over the course of the day. If you used the morning clear out method, you may choose to deal with the remaining emails first thing when you get to your desk and then close your inbox for a few hours and get to your own to do list...

OR

...you could tackle your most important *MUST GET DONE TODAY* item first and then come back to your email once that task is complete. Generally speaking, you should aim to work for 1-3 hours between checking your inbox, (unless your primary function is to monitor incoming leads, and then you’ll want to get back to people asap).

3 - Decide HOW - you’re going to handle the emails that can’t be answered right away and require some additional work on your end.

If you’re using **iMail** you can use the **Flags** feature and label one “**To Do’s**” so you know what you have to come back to.

If you’re using **Gmail** you can use the **Task List** feature and create a running list of emails you need to come back to.

If you’re using **Microsoft Outlook** you can create **Categories** and label one “**To Do’s**” to keep a running list.

When using a “**To Do**” list, I also like marking all emails on the list as “**unread**” so the numerical counter acts as an additional visual reminder.

You can watch my free tutorials for using Gmail and Outlook **here**.

4 - Do One Final Check - Before you head out for the day, check your inbox one last time and use the *delete / forward / quick reply / save for later* method from the morning clear out. Again, the goal is to get as close to zero as possible, but you don’t want to spend an extra hour at work on an email that came in right before you were going to wrap up for the day.

Read the full “Conquering Your Inbox” blog series **here**.

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