

By Barb Bruno, CPC, CTS

The amount of email in your inbox is probably increasing each month. Have you ever tracked how much time you spend answering email? Are your unanswered emails costing you possible sales? Your greatest challenge is to read, sort, organize and assimilate the massive amounts of data you're exposed to daily. It's easy to understand how you can become overwhelmed.

Here are some tips to help you handle email information overload:

TIP ONE: Set Specific Times To Check Your Email

It is not necessary to answer an email the minute you see it appear – unless you're working a fast paced, high volume temp desk. It is more efficient if you assign specific times to respond to your email. This will allow you to stay more focused and will definitely improve your efficiency.

TIP TWO: Never Touch an Email in Your INBOX More Than Once

You heard me, stop reading the same emails over and over and over! When you view an email force yourself to do one of the following:

1. Delete it immediately
2. Respond to it
3. Put it in a folder (more to follow)
4. Flag it for later action. If you use MS Outlook you can set the action, time and date of the reminder. This is still procrastinating, but at least you can track the volume of these follow ups.
5. If it is junk, add sender to your blocked sender's list

One of the greatest time wasters is reading and rereading the same email and not taking any action. Obviously the two best actions to take are Numbers 1 and 2 from above.

TIP THREE: Sort Your email

Most email programs allow you to create folders and subfolders to sort your emails. This simplifies your ability to locate important information you want to retain.

TIP FOUR: Set Up Rules

Set up rules which allow you to automatically sort your email as it arrives. This is done based on a set of criteria you establish such as subject line or sender's email address. You can accomplish this by color-coding the email or by sending it to a particular folder – even the deleted items folder.

TIP FIVE: Templates

Set up templates if your email provider offers this feature. This feature saves you an incredible amount of time for the responses you send that require the same or similar information on a regular basis. Create your message based on your pre-established template and edit as needed.

TIP SIX: Cut, Copy and Paste

Learn how to use the cut, copy and paste functions which are features in today's operating systems and office suites. You can cut and paste information from one document to another, saving typing time. Copy from other documents and just paste the information into your emails. Once you learn how to use this feature, you will wonder how you ever lived without it!

TIP SEVEN: Delete is Always an Option

Realize that your ability to hit the X or the delete key is the best way to eliminate data. That of course does not apply to the emails you receive from me!

TIP EIGHT: Signature Line

You can use different signatures for different parts of your business. You might want to utilize a different signature line for clients and candidates. Most people use only 20-30% of their email program's capability. If you increase your usage to just 50% you will become more efficient.

Invest some time in learning more of the features of your email program and then customize it to work the way you want it to. This will help you manage your email much more efficiently and will enhance your ability to increase your production!

If you own Barb's **Top Producer Tutor** – Do you know what changes to make to take advantage of current trends? **Special Discounted Pricing** is now available for Barb's 26-week [Strategic Management Tutor](#). If you have questions, call our office **219.663.9609!**