Manage Your E-Mail

Much incoming e-mail can be routed to the right place, read once, then filed—or deleted. This can help cut your e-mail clutter. At the least, do a clean-up once a month. Create e-mail folders for specific clients, projects, or subject areas, rather than leaving them in your inbox forever.

You can drag and drop to file each e-mail, or you can create filters to drive e-mails automatically to a folder you designate. But don't go overboard—too many narrow, specific folders makes it harder to locate e-mails later. If your e-mail software doesn't allow you to create folders, an alternative is to use Save As to save e-mails as text files. Group them into directories by client, project, function, etc.

Use detailed subject headers—sometimes the whole message can be in the header! This saves time when searching for old e-mails later on. Insert "NRN" in subject headers when no reply is necessary. Customize your e-mail software to display all the information you need at a glance. Microsoft Outlook allows you to add columns to your e-mail screen.

Delete unneeded e-mails regularly. You usually only need to save the last message of an ongoing "conversation"—the most recent message contains quote backs of all previous messages.

Keep your inbox lean so it becomes an extension of your To-Do list. Everything you must keep should be dragged into the correct folder. Only e-mails that require action should remain in the inbox for more than a day.

If you follow the above tips, you won't need to print most of your e-mails—you can save time by filing and accessing them digitally! However, for a meeting away from your office or a project for which most information is not digital—then printing e-mails makes sense. Printing e-mails should be the exception however, not the rule.

Unfortunately, filters are no longer adequate to control spam. Consider a spam blocker that checks incoming e-mails against a list of "accepted senders" that you create. Two "permission-only" programs are Postmaster Pro and Spam Arrest.

Create templates for routine replies. Last but not least, know when to telephone. Unless you need to send the same message a group, or keep a record of what you said when to whom, the phone may be faster.

Jasper, J. (n.d.). *Manage your e-mail.* Retrieved November 12, 2013, from the Life Organizers Web site: http://www.lifeorganizers.com