

DAILY CONTRIBUTOR STRATEGY #4 EMAIL EFFICIENCY

Email is like a medication. It can cure a lot of things, but there is the potential for some serious side effects. Email can be used as an effective form of communication, or it can be a costly interrupter.

Before I share how to deal with email every time you use it, get ready to implement the following tips:

“It’s not enough to be busy. The question is: What are we busy about?”
- Henry David Thoreau

- **Close your email.** With your email minimized on your computer screen, you can be interrupted by pop-up notifications and chimes that may occur. That constant interruption takes you away from focusing and being productive. Consider checking all emails that collect in the inbox once in the morning, once at noon, and once late in the day. If your job requires you to be more plugged in than that, check it at the top of every hour. Just make sure it is when you choose, and when several have collected, instead of being interrupted for each one. Taking the first 10 minutes of every hour to check, sort, and respond to emails, will make you much more efficient.

- **Get to 10 or fewer emails in your inbox.** It’s easy to get caught up in mounting lists of emails in your Inbox. Two things can happen. First, you spend an exorbitant amount of time reading new emails and sifting through old ones. Secondly, you feel so overwhelmed that you do nothing to address the mountain of email. Important emails could be lost in the abyss. When you have 10 or fewer emails in your Inbox, productivity goes up and it feels great.

To get to 10 or fewer emails in your inbox, take a day to catch up and then do the following whenever you open email. Every message should be handled in one of four ways:

1. *Delete it.* If no follow-up is required, get it out of sight.
2. *File or archive it.* Learn to use the folders, subfolders, and label features in your email system. If you need something for future reference, then you’ll be able to pull it up quickly. “It’s not enough to be busy. The question is: What are we busy about?” - Henry David Thoreau

3. *Deal with it now.* Sometimes all that's needed is a quick confirmation or other response. If you can answer in two minutes or less, do it right away.

4. *Flag it for follow-up.* If a message needs action, but you aren't ready to deal with it yet, use your program's alert or flag function even if it is just to flag it for tomorrow. The reminder will bring it back to your attention so you can get it out of your Inbox and off of your mind.

Your IQ falls 10 points when you're taking constant calls, emails and text messages—the same amount as if you'd lost an entire night's sleep.

- *University of London study*