Email Zen

Freedom from Email Overload

BY CIARA CONLON

CHAPTER ONE

Clearing the Way

Why Email Zen?

It is often said that email is on its way out, that instant messaging and social media will overtake in their attempt to control our day to day communication.

It's not happening;

Email is still the number one business tool and it is looking like it will be for many more years to come. So why is it that the main tool that we use each day is responsible for the biggest distraction and time wastage recorded in a day? Why do most workers have an overloaded inbox? The reason is because of an assumption. We assume that everybody knows how to deal with email. We think email software is intuitive and easy to use. In my experience, after almost ten years looking at people's inboxes, most people don't use their email program in an efficient way. Only 10% of the people I meet have an organised inbox and of those 10%, there was always room for improvement.

Whether you receive 10 or 100 emails a day; you are expected to fit your email in along with all your other roles and responsibilities. Email has become the most commonly used TO DO list and believe me that is not a good plan for a productive worker.

What to do?

We need a way of working with email that will reduce the time we spend in our inbox and maximise the amount of real work we actually get done. Email should be an enhancement to our daily communications not a hindrance. They say a poor workman blames his tools, unfortunately with email we can't blame the tool, the problem lies with the workman and the way in which he uses his tool.

This eBook aims to teach you (the workman!) how to use your communication tool effectively, maximising its benefits and minimising the negative impact it can have on your productivity and efficiency. By the time you have finished reading and implementing the tips suggested, you will have been set free from the chains of your overloaded inbox.

Your Relationship with Email

Depending on your role in your organisation and the industry you work in, you will have different uses for email. For self-employed people email may be your main link to the outside world. For Accountants and Lawyers maintaining email records is an essential part of the job and care must be taken not to delete or lose important records.

Only you can decide what is going to work for you when organising and eliminating email from your world. This book is a guideline to how your life could be different. Adopt the principles and you will gain a substantial amount of time daily.

On average, time savings of an hour a day are reported from organising your world of work and email in a better way. I hope you will experience the same benefits.

Your Email Personality

Another factor to take into consideration is your personality types. Because we all differ in our approach to work, we relate to email in different ways. Some may typically chose to use email or text messaging while others will always prefer the directness of the telephone. There will be times when one or the other means of communication is appropriate. Understanding your current way of working with email is the first step to taking control of your email and your life. *Which type are you?*

The Sporadic Purger

Your email inbox has less than 50 emails; occasionally you purge your email and delete all the old emails. You dislike clutter in your life but you don't really have a system to organise your email.

The Clutter Freak

You have so many emails in your inbox you are embarrassed to say. You never file them or delete them, you don't have time.

The Clutter Free

You have less than ten emails in your inbox, you clear them daily but you spend a lot of time organising and filing. You keep the emails that you still have to deal with or the ones which are awaiting a reply.

The Boss

You have always had someone to look after your emails why should you start now?

THE GOOD NEWS

There is a solution for all types; regardless of who you are and how many emails you receive daily, this system will work for you. You will learn how to organise your inbox, how to behave with email and how to ensure that you don't waste any more time getting distracted by email at the wrong time.

Choose what email personality type you have above and read below how you will benefit from this book.

The Sporadic Purger

You will benefit from adopting a system so that you won't be an "all or nothing" person anymore. With daily processing and a weekly review you can keep your inbox clutter free every day. You already know the benefits of the clutter free inbox so adoption of the new principles will be easy for you.

The Clutter Freak

You my friend will find your life transformed if you can stick with the system. This book will eliminate the inbox stress that you currently experience. No more forgetting to reply or losing emails. You will now adopt a system to organise your email and your life. Get Ready for Big Change.

The Clutter Free

Your system is currently taking up too much of your time, the benefits of being clutter free are being lost from over organising, you will benefit from a simple system for organising your work that comes your way through email.

The Boss

Up to recently you had a PA but times have changed; now you have to fend for yourself. You will learn how to take control of your future and your inbox. Lots to learn, so stick with it and you will be rewarded with calm control and a stress free inbox.

Setting Boundaries

Do you need to change your behaviour? How much do you allow email into your life? How often do you check your email? Where do you access email? On your phone, tablet, laptop or Kindle? Do you need this constant connectivity?

Decide When and Where?

Taking Control of your email means making upfront decisions about when and where you will access your email.

What devices will you receive email on?

A lot of people are moving away from having their email on their phones. With iPads, tablets and notebooks, do we really need our email on our phones too?

If you get a panic attack at the thoughts of deleting your email account off your phone, don't worry you can hang onto it for now but you must set boundaries to keep from looking at it at inappropriate times.

Take some time to decide what devices you are happy to receive email on? If you are brave enough delete your email from all devices other than your main work computer. You will see how your life changes for the better. Free yourself from the clutches of constant connectivity. Break the chains of routine and stop checking your emails.

What time of the day?

Which days and at what times am I accessible by email? On a couple of occasions when working late at night catching up on my emails, I have sent an email and received a reply within seconds. The signature at the end of the email read: "From my iPhone".

I wonder what that person was doing when he or she wrote that email. Were they relaxing, watching TV? Were they mid conversation with their partner when the message came though? How did they know they had an email, are they constantly checking emails, or did they get a notification? Surely there is a switch off time?

Decide when you are going to stay connected. What days and what times.

Respect

Remember that it is not necessary to respond to email immediately, it is a form of communication which allows for next day response. It is even acceptable to reply a couple of days later if you excuse yourself for the delay. If a person needs to contact you urgently they can use a more direct form of communication such as the phone.

It is also important to remember that the person sitting in front of you or beside you takes precedence over an email even if it is from your best client. Don't let your relationships be affected by bad manners when it comes to electronic communications.

CHAPTER TWO

Reduce Incoming mail

Small Changes – Big Impact

Start by making a couple these small changes that will have a big impact.

Close Email

Close your email programme when you want to get other work done. If I leave my email open when writing, I go to it regularly, every time my brain gets tired and I feel like a break I switch windows. It took me a long time to realise that I needed to close the program before sitting down to write. In this way I will pause and maybe breathe or stretch rather than click and consume more information.

Turn off Notifications

Another simple step is to turn off email notifications. Most of us have a number of social media accounts, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google +. If you were to leave your notifications switched on for all of these networks you would never get any focused work done.

Turn off Email Notifications

We know that mail is a great tool when used for the right thing at the right time, even with so many other types of communication available, instant messaging, text messaging, skype, google hangouts and the reliable telephone; email is still the number one form of business communications. If email is going to be part of your daily life, start by switching off notifications of new mail. In your email programme go look for notifications in your Options or Preferences menu. You will find options such as "When new message arrives: Play a sound etc.". You want to turn this off. The benefit of doing this is that you are no longer slave to your email. You decide when you are going to your inbox you are not dragged there by a sound, a changing mouse pointer or an envelope icon in the taskbar.

Do this now and already you will lighter and more in control.

Turn off notifications on your Phone

With smart phones always in our pocket, we have the ability to respond immediately to emails, tweets and Facebook alerts. Switch off these alerts.

When you do this you become the decision maker as opposed to the one distracted by things you haven't planned. How many times have you been working to be distracted by a notification that someone has mentioned you in a tweet, or posted a photo of you on Facebook. It is only the strongest of will that can avoid taking a look. "It will only take me a second" which can turn into ten or fifteen minutes or worse!

iPads and Tablets have similar settings, so do the same for them. Your android or windows phone will have similar settings. Do not continue until you have switched them off - I guarantee you your life will be better because of it. Your relationships will improve and your children will thank you for it.

TURN OFF NOTIFICATIONS NOW BEFORE MOVING ON TO NEXT SECTION!

Unsubscribe to Unwanted Communication

Unsubscribe to Newsletters

Take a look at your inbox, how many of the emails that you receive daily are of value? How many are from newsletters you don't read or mailing lists you don't need to be part of. Instead of just deleting them as they arrive, take a few minutes to eliminate them from your inbox forever. Wouldn't that be nice? At the bottom of each email newsletter you receive you should see an *unsubscribe* link. Take the time to click on the link in the emails that you no longer read. The person who owns the list won't be offended they prefer to have people signed up who are genuinely interested in their services.
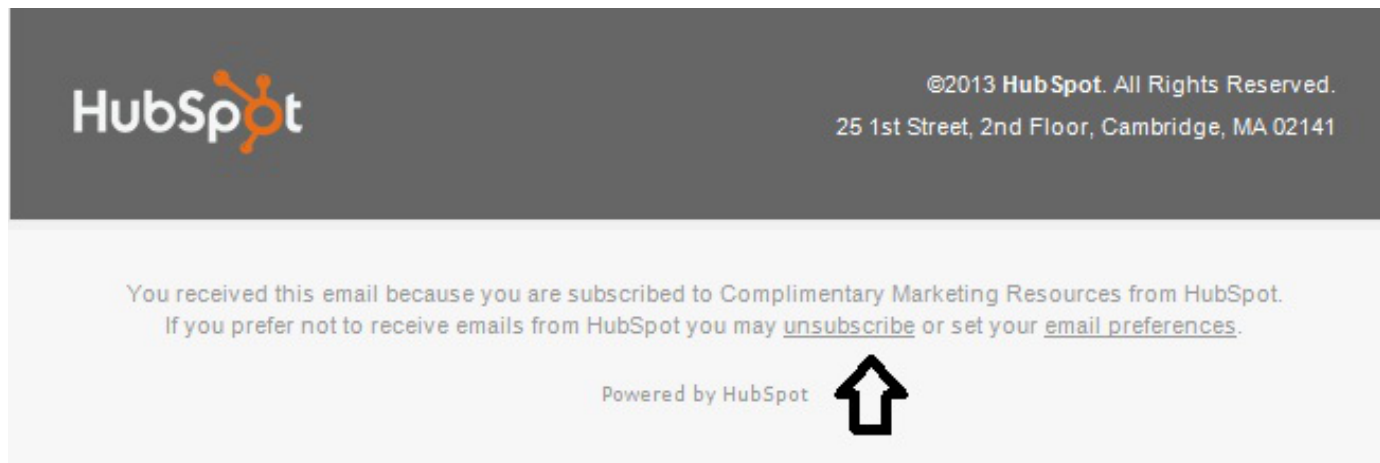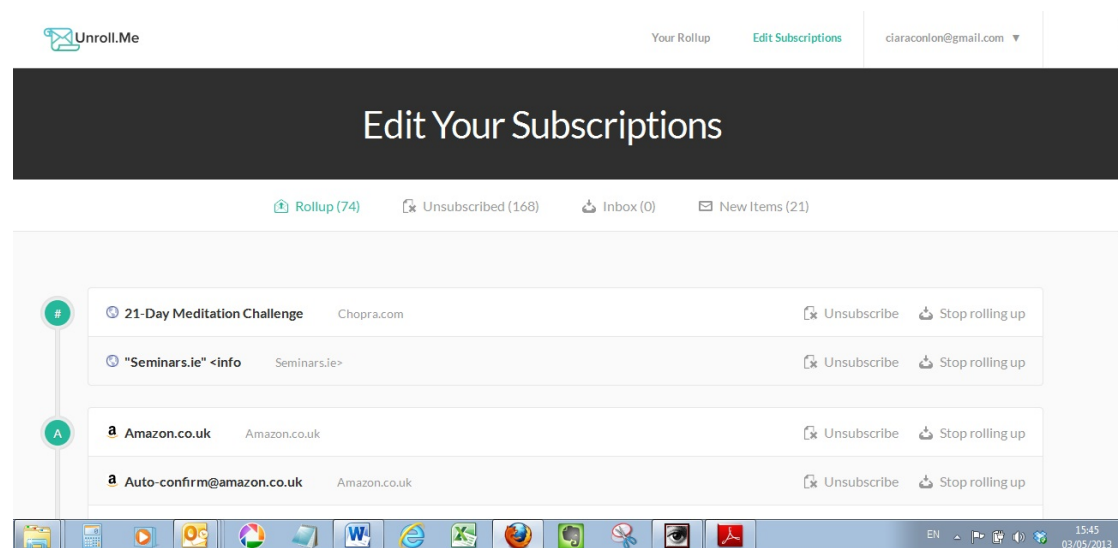
Unrollme

There is a service that will do the work for you. It's called unroll me and it will give a list of all the newsletters and email lists that you are subscribed to. Currently it supports Gmail, Google Apps, and Yahoo but they are busy working on supporting AOL and other email clients, so keep an eye out if yours

is not supported. From one screen you can unsubscribe to numerous newsletters and email lists. As you will see below I have unsubscribed to 168 lists with this service. GASP! Highly recommended if your email client is supported. To get started go to unroll.me

Subscriber Email Address

I subscribe to all newsletters with a personal email address so that my main work email does not become overloaded with noise. Consider setting up an email address specifically for subscriptions in this way you keep your main inbox free for important communications and you can go to the other inbox only when you have time to read the newsletters.

Mailing Lists

Are you a member of any company mailing lists? Do an Audit of all the groups and mailing lists you are a member of. Is the information you receive still relevant to your job? Decide if it is really necessary to be part of these lists, if you can, take your name off any lists that aren't essential for your job.

Dealing with Spam

According to Microsoft: Spam is any kind of unwanted online communication.

Not all spam is harmful but all spam is annoying. So regardless of whether the spam is trying to steal your identity or just tick you off, we need tactics to eliminate it from our lives.
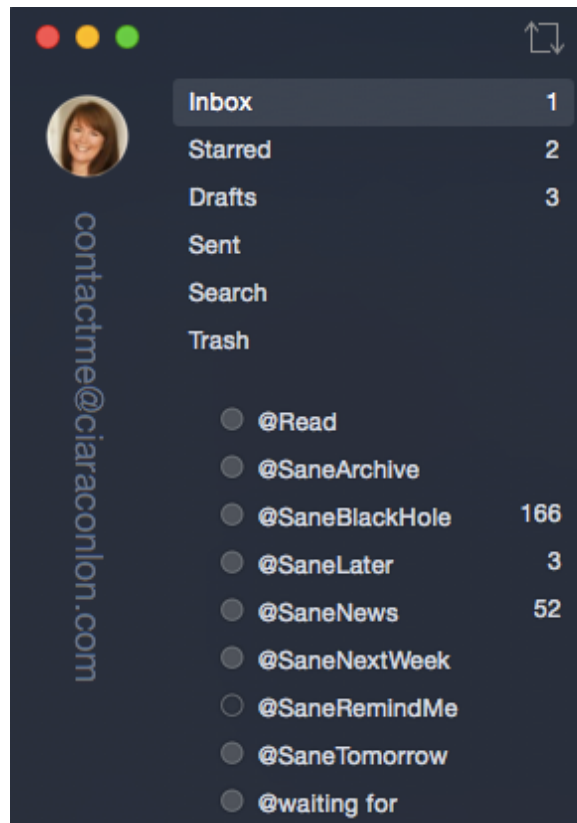
Tips to Avoid Spam

- Never respond to an email or open an attachment that makes you suspicious, if you do the spammer will know that your account is active and you will likely receive tons more spam as a result.

- Never click on a link inside a spam message, even if it says unsubscribe, again this will tell the spammer that you are real and worth hassling again!

- Switch off Auto response messages, another way to alert spammers to the fact that your email is active

- Never send personal details or bank details over email. Spammers often send emails, claiming to be a financial institution who wants to confirm your account details. This type of spam is called phising, one of the more dangerous types of spam.

- Share your email address only with people you know

- When you sign up for something online or buy something make sure you are alert to any boxes that say we can share your information with third parties.

- Never post your email address on a forum or on your website, make sure to spell out your email address for example contactme[AT]ciaraconlon[DOT]com

- When you do receive a spam message make sure you use your email software Junk mail facility to block sender. (At least that email address will never spam you again)

- Make sure your antivirus software is up to date and is set to scan all incoming emails.

- You could also set up a rule to send potential spam directly to your delete folder

@Sanebox

Inbox 1
Starred 2
Drafts 3
Sent
Search
Trash

@Read
@SaneArchive
@SaneBlackHole 166
@SaneLater 3
@SaneNews 52
@SaneNextWeek
@SaneRemindMe
@SaneTomorrow
@waiting for

contactme@ciaraconlon.com

One way to save yourself from spam is to use a program like Sanebox. Sanebox uses algorithms to determine the importance of each email you receive, it moves unimportant messages out of the Inbox into a separate folder, and summarises them for you. Allowing you to focus on what's important. You can defer emails until you are ready to deal with them by putting them in the @SaneTomorrow or @SaneNextWeek Folders. It also filters newsletters and files them into the @SaneNews folder and any email that it thinks is of lesser importance it will put it into the @Sanelater folder for you to review at your convenience. Sanebox saves me hours each week by sorting my inbox for me.

CHAPTER THREE

Getting Organised

Email Workflow

If you follow the steps outlined in the next few pages you can have a clear inbox every day. This method works; I have clients that receive in excess of 200 emails a day and manage to maintain a Zen inbox. With a couple of simple habits you will no longer be a slave to your email.

A lot of people who receive crazy amounts of email daily quickly realise that a lot of the email is unsolicited and not relevant, following the simple steps laid out in Chapter 1 like unsubscribing to newsletters and improving your spam filters, your email quite possibly can be halved and the remaining important email can be organised like I will show you shortly.

The Legends

Thanks to Merlin Mann's Inbox Zero Technique and David Allen's GTD, I entered the world of productivity with reluctant vigour, I wanted to teach others, I wasn't doing it for myself, it was all too detailed and structured for me, not something I could ever apply myself. But to teach others you must know something really well. I unenthusiastically adopted all the principles, I learnt all the rules and many I adopted. The one thing I can honestly say I can't live without is my email workflow. Reaching inbox zero at least once a week, makes me feel calmer and in control of what's coming my way. Below is the system I use for processing my email. It may feel like work at first, but if you stick with it you will be enjoying the benefits in no time.

Research shows that 50 per cent of your email can be deleted 30 per cent can be delegated or completed in less than 2 minutes and 20 per cent can be deferred to your calendar or task list. So when you follow Barbara Hemphill's F.A.T method of organisation you will learn how to create a respectable clutter free inbox that even a productivity pro would be proud of.

Email Map for Action

Email is just one of many types of communication that comes your way each day. Your inbox is the place to capture your electronic mail; it is not a place to store tasks or to plan out your day. Information comes at us in many forms each day and we need to decide what to do with it.

Emails can be treated in much the same way as ideas, post, fax, text messages and voicemails. The first question we must ask ourselves is *what is it?*
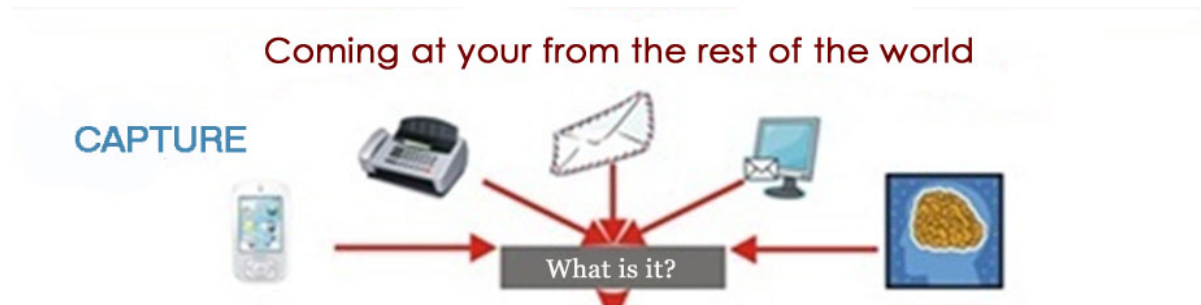
When you have decided what it is the next question of is:

What should I do with it?

There are only three options with the F.A.T. method of dealing with email. File, Act or Trash

For emails that you have accepted into your workflow, you need to determine whether they require action now, action later, they are for filing or they can be deleted.

1. File the emails that need to be kept for reference

2. Delete the emails you have no requirement for (Trash)

3. Make a decision on what needs to be done with the emails that require action.

Filing

So how do you know what you need to be filed?

Start with the following questions

- Do you need to keep correspondence for compliance or is there any legal requirement for holding on to past communications?
- Is this email the only source of this information?
- Will I need this information in the near future?

If the answer is yes to any of these questions then the obvious answer is to keep the email and file it. If the email needs to be actioned before being filed, the following pages will explain what to do with it.

How to File

Traditional thinking was to create individual folders, similar to a paper filing system which has a folder for each client, each project, each account etc. What tends to happen with this approach is that you spend more time filing and processing your emails than actually doing any work. A better solution is to create one big reference folder and dump everything you need to hold onto in there. You may want to create a couple of folders for key accounts but in general the search facility in most programmes is good enough to find what you are looking for promptly.

If you use the Getting Things Done methodology you may have folders such as @read or @waiting for. The trick is to have as few folders as possible but as many as necessary to make things run smoothly. If there is information in an email that you would like to keep, decide if filing the email is the best option. If you need to store an email address, or a person's contact details, take the information from the email and create a contact. Delete the email. If there is information in the email that you need to use for a particular project, putting the information into a word file or a note in a program like Evernote may be a better option.

Delete or Bin

I love to delete email; there is nothing that gives me more satisfaction in the world. Delete, delete, delete, I have rarely come across an occasion when I needed something I had deleted. People hold onto emails unnecessarily. Test yourself this week and see how many emails you can actually delete, in this next section you will be guided as to what to do with the emails that need to be actioned.

Organise for Action

So what do we do with the emails that have work inside them? We need to write a proposal, create an appointment, call somebody or simply think about the response. Most productivity experts will advise if something can be done in less than two or three minutes, do it. This avoids procrastination and reduces your task list considerably. What to do with what's left over?

We need to follow a system that will help you to make upfront decisions about what exactly the task required is and how you will organise the work.

Start by quickly scanning your email for important or urgent email, filter by the person who sent you the email, by subject or by date sent. Scan the emails with your reading pane to see how important they are. (Go to View, Reading Pane to turn on)

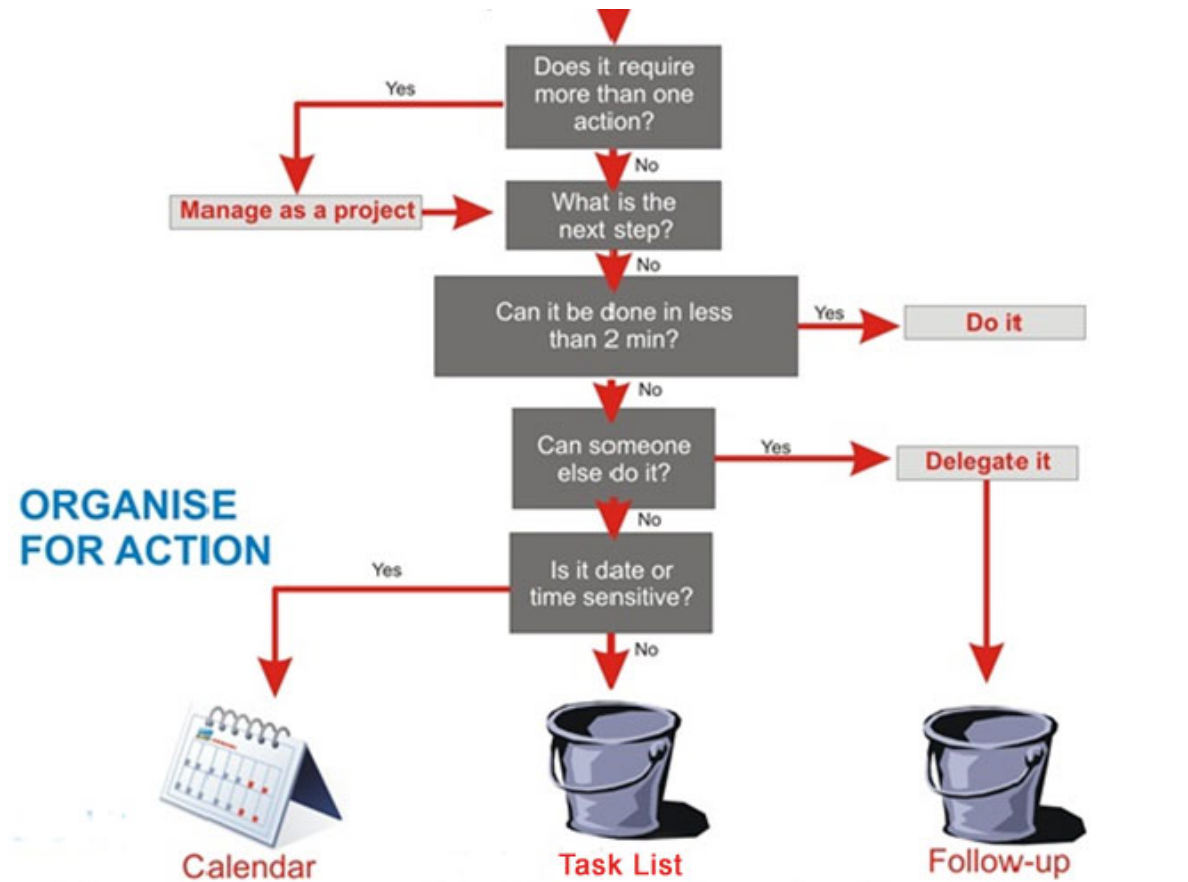To filter your mail by person, subject or date, click on the top bar in your inbox called

Arranged by:

In this example of Outlook you can arrange by date, sender, recipient, subject etc.
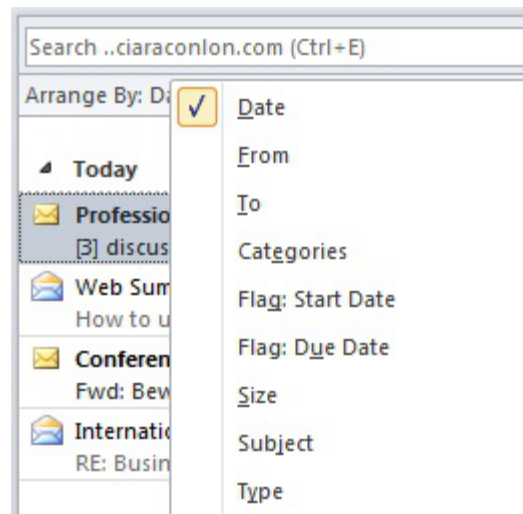
The Map for Action

Take the first email and **deal with it** before moving on to the next email. You must make a decision on what needs to be done with the email before moving on.

Does it require more than one action?

If yes, you will manage the task like a project, if not,

What is the next step?

1. Can it be done in less than two minutes?

   If yes, do it immediately and then delete or file the email.

2. Can someone else do it?

   If yes Delegate it and create a follow up system

   (A follow up system could consist of a note with all delegated items or it could be a folder with email copied into the folder to be checked at a later date)

3. Is it date or time sensitive?

   If yes, then it must be scheduled in your calendar

   If no, it can be managed as a task

Each time you process your email you should follow the F.A.T rule, File Act or Trash, never move onto the next item until you have made a decision about what to do with the email

Now we need to plan and schedule the work we need to do. To do this we need a calendar and a task management system.

Calendar

After using the Map for Action you will know that calendars are for Date or Time specific actions. Traditionally calendars were used to remind you of appointments, birthdays and other special occasions. Every day we receive lots of emails with lots of different types of tasks that need doing. There will be traditional appointments and special occasions but you will also have lots of tasks and projects that need to get done. Your calendar will become your planning tool, a way to get these things done.

Procrastination

The act of procrastination is putting off to tomorrow what should be done today.

Beating procrastination is a major challenge for a lot of people. Never fear because the number one solution to procrastination is scheduling. Creating space in your calendar to complete the tasks you otherwise like to avoid. Work out how much time you will need to complete each task and create the space in your calendar. If it is a large project, schedule a first step. If you plan your week in advance it

is less likely you will let time wasting tasks disturb your day and prevent you from accomplishing what you set out to do.

What gets scheduled?

When you process your email put all of your time specific actions into your calendar. Schedule time for everything that needs to get done in the next week. Any job that takes more than 15 mins should be allocated time in your calendar. Remember you can use a paper based calendar to do this but an electronic calendar has many advantages. If you have a smart phone you can sync your smart phone with your calendar so you have access to your calendar at all times. It is also easier to adjust an electronic calendar for the times when things don't go according to plan. It's a very rare occasion when our day turns out exactly as we planned it, when this happens it is easier to adjust an electronic calendar and reschedule any jobs that didn't get done.

Adding Appointments to Calendar

When you decide that an emails actions are date or time specific we will capture it in the Calendar, either as an Appointment/Meeting (time sensitive) or as an "All Day Event" (day sensitive). You can copy/move the complete e-mail, or highlight only relevant sections, which can then be right drag-and-dropped to the calendar either as appointment or an "All day event".
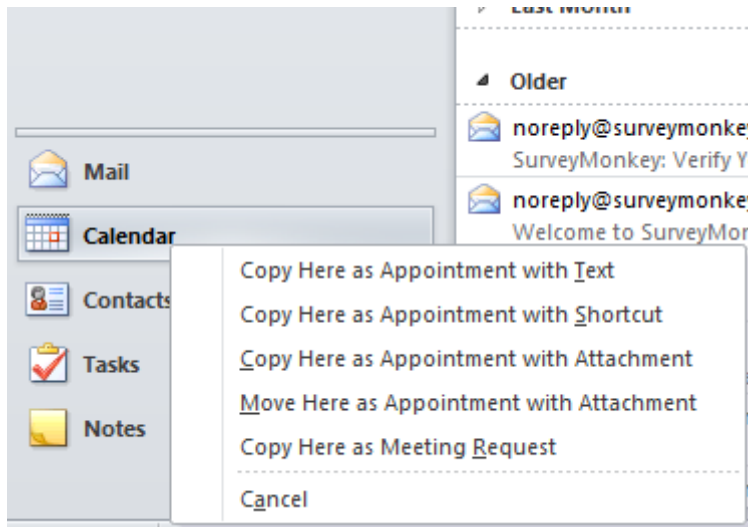
Right drag (right click on the email in your inbox and hold down the key to right drag) the email to the calendar. When you release the mouse you will be given a menu with different options to copy or move the email to the calendar. If the email has an attachment that too will be copied to the appointment. When the appointment has been copied you can delete it from your inbox as all details will have been copied across.

Task Management

The first thing people usually do when the realise they need to get organised is to make a list. A list of all the things they need to do and would like to do. Otherwise known as a To Do list. The problem with To Do lists are that they are usually uncategorised, un-prioritised and fuzzy. In fact they can even end up causing stress as the owner of the list regularly looks at it to see what else needs to be done.

If you are looking at the same list over and over and things aren't progressing you will start to feel overwhelmed. To Do lists tend to facilitate the completion of easy "nice tasks" with the larger or more challenging ones staying in the same position week after week, month after month.

Enter the Task List

A tasks list categorises the task which can tend to help with the prioritisation of tasks. Batching similar tasks together helps to save time, as we already know task switching is not the most productive way to spend our time.

There are many good task managers out there, Todoist, Asana, Remember the milk and Wunderlist. I use a combination of Todoist and Evernote to store all my tasks, notes, goals and research.

Adding Tasks to Evernote

If you are an Outlook use you can automatically add a task to Evernote through Outlook, by clicking on the button that appears on the ribbon to the right.
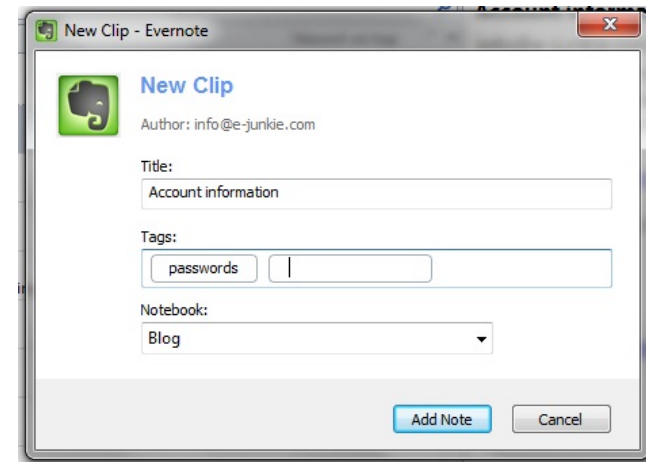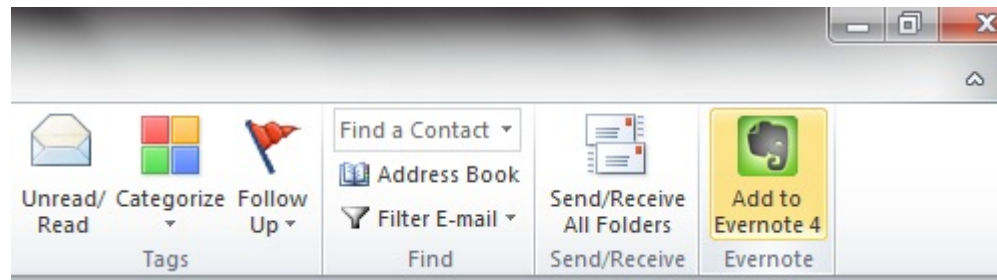

When you click on this button the window to the right will appear The subject of the email will be entered in the Title field. You can add tags to help you to find the note at a later date. Make sure you change the notebook by clicking on the Notebook dropdown so that your notes are stored to the correct notebook. In this case Blog.

Click on Add Note and the note will be added to Evernote

Gmail users have the option of installing Powerbot or using Zapier or IFTTT. Mac mail users can also use Powerbot

Airmail
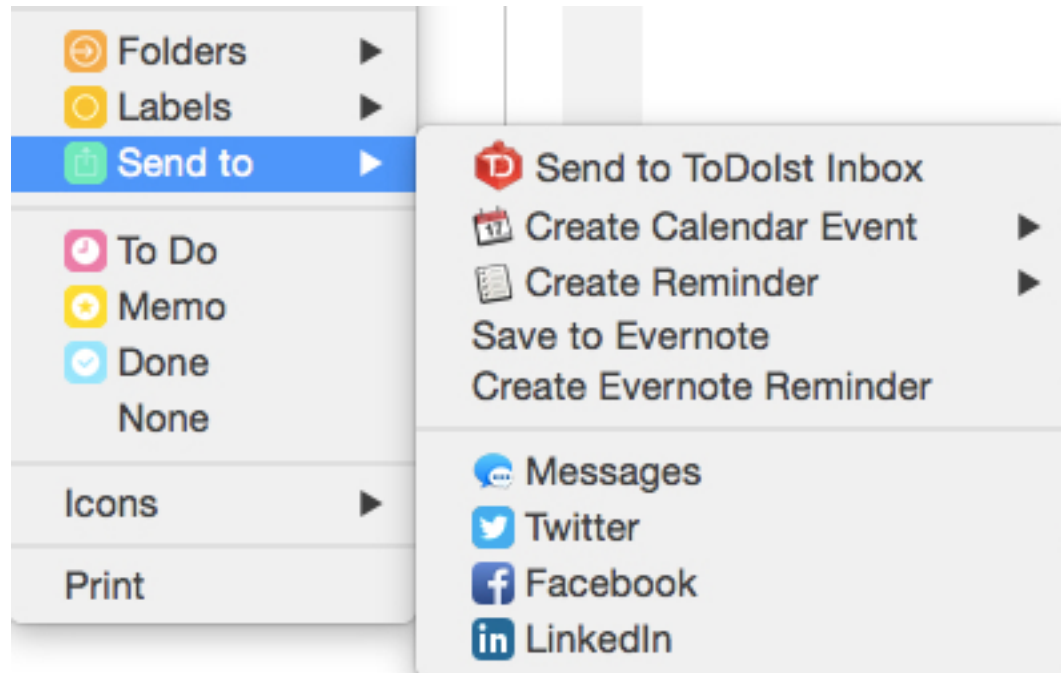
I use Airmailer for Mac and this gives me the option to send to both Todoist or Evernote or directly to my calendar. There are many different options and solutions to help you get organised. The trick is to chose a tasks manager and stick to it. You won't know how effective it is until you commit to it fully.

Only then will you see the true value and feel the benefit of a clear inbox.

CHAPTER FOUR

Effective Email Communication

Writing Better Emails

Subject Lines -Descriptive Subject Line

A subject line should grab your attention and inform you what the email is about. Your recipient should be clear about what the email is about and whether it is important enough for him to open. Take a look at the emails in your inbox right now. What subject lines grab your attention? Which ones alert you to exactly what's in the email? Which ones make you want to open the email? When you are writing your email subject lines, think about what would make you want to open your email.

Action Required?

If the email requires an urgent reply or an important action this can be put in the subject line to alert the recipient to what is required and what the time frame is.

To: ciara@ciara.com

Subject: Order Request to be confirmed before Friday at 1pm - Please Reply by return

In this example the recipient is alerted to what is required, order to be confirmed.

The sender also asks for what he wants the recipient to do "Please Reply by Return"

Abbreviations

[EOM] End of Message. This can be a great time saver, but is something you don't see too often. Write your message in the Subject Line and end it with [EOM] End of Message. This informs your recipient that the whole email is contained in the subject line.

To: ciara@ciara.com

Subject: Invoice received, will forward cheque [EOM]

No need for opening and closing emails the message is right there in front of you.

Another common one is FYI, For Your Information. This is usually used to alert you to some information that you may not be aware of. There are many other abbreviations used by different companies, your company may have abbreviations for different tasks, if you receive an email with an acronym you don't understand, don't be embarrassed to ask the sender what it means.

Update the Subject Line

It is advisable to update and edit the subject line of an email as the conversation progresses. If the initial email was to arrange a meeting and the conversation continues about the content of the meeting, it is a good idea to change the subject accordingly.

It is also appropriate to update the subject line when a message has to be forwarded to someone else. The subject line should reflect what is required of them as opposed to the original subject.

Blank Subject Line

Never send an email with a blank subject line, this reduces the likelihood of your email ever being read. We are all busy and leaving an email subject blank is sending a message that the email content is not important enough to bother with.

Writing Time Savers

We also want to save time writing. Every second you save quickly adds up to minutes and hours, so by writing more quickly, eliminating tasks that you do repeatedly and learning how to move around the keyboard more efficiently you can save considerable amounts of time each year. If you save just ten minutes a day this adds up to one week in a year. From making one small change you could be saving a

week a year, if you are self-employed think what you could do with a whole week? If you work for someone else you could easily increase your performance and productivity or you could use it to slack off some more, the choice is yours.

Email Signature

Always use an email signature. It saves you time writing and rewriting your name every time you write and email. It also gives a more professional look to an email and reduces the possibility of someone wasting your time and contacting you for your phone number or postal address. Go to Signatures in your email program and set it up now. It's one of those tasks you have been meaning to do but never seem to have the time. Go make the time and you will recuperate the time wasted on writing your signature in less than a week.

Text Replacement Programmes

Programmes that replace a key stroke with predefined text can be invaluable. Imagine you always end your emails with the following chunk of text "Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions" and if you type P and double space you can automatically insert that text into your email or document. You can use it for your website address or email address or anything else that you repetitively type. Large passages of text can be replaced in seconds. The programme I use is [Active words](), it also opens up my browser on particular websites and launches programs. If I type "mailhubby" and double space it will open up an email from my outlook pre-populated with my husband's email address, pretty cool no? And for the Evernote fans in the audience it has an Evernote Add on too, allows you to open up a new note and away you go.

Learn How to Type

This was one of the best things I ever did for my productivity. If you don't know how to type with all five fingers download a typing tutor and get started, it will save you chunks of time.

Keyboard Shortcuts

Learn some keyboard shortcuts, using your keyboard instead of a mouse or track pad can cut down on a lot of time moving from one action to another. Another great timesaver worth investing time in.

Shortcuts and tips for Outlook

Ctrl+Shift+**N** = Create new note	Ctrl+Shift+**M** = Create new e-mail
Ctrl+Shift+**C** = Create new contact	Ctrl+Shift+**L** = Create new distribution list
Ctrl+Shift+**K** = Create new task	Ctrl+Shift+**U** = Create new task request (assign task)
Ctrl+Shift+**A** = Create new appointment	Ctrl+Shift+**Q** = Create new meeting request
Ctrl+Shift+**J** = Create new journal entry	Ctrl+Shift+**H** = Create new Office document
Ctrl+Shift+**I** = Takes you to the e-mail Inbox	Ctrl+Shift+**B** = Opens your address book

Responding to Emails

Our response is just as important as writing an initial email, it is just as important to keep our response clear and concise and to follow the guide laid out in Writing Better Emails.

Timely Response

Taking control of your email inbox, means that you take back the control of your email and you don't react to every email that enters your inbox. That is not to say that you should let emails lie in your inbox unanswered while you sit calmly meditating. Emails should be responded to in a timely manner, respecting the fact that the sender took the trouble to email you in the first place.

Thank in advance

To reduce the amount of email sent, thank people in advance. If you are asking someone to do something for you that you know they will do, thank them in advance, don't wait for their response to acknowledge what they are going to do for you.

No Response Required

You could also tell them no need to reply unless there are any problems. This will cut down on at least two emails. This may seem pretty futile but if you add up all the time spent on unnecessary emails a day it would probably give you time to have a coffee and catch up with a friend, which would you rather do?

Definitely No Response Required

If you receive an email telling you that you will receive money or free goods for sending the email on to 10 or 20 people in your inbox – this is a hoax. Neither will a company donate money to charity depending on the number of emails you send to your address book, that too is a hoax. It may appear tempting if somebody is giving you something for nothing but unfortunately they are people in this world who are dishonest and very clever. There is also the fact that in this world we rarely get something for nothing, especially over email.

Email Protocol for your Company

Instilling a company culture for effective email usage is an important step on the road to clear and organised inboxes. Here are some ideas what to do and how to do it.

Start by creating a company email usage policy document, this document should state how email is to be used and what behaviour is expected around email. This document should advise employees of best practises around email and the internal methods used to reduce quantities of emails sent.

Have a **company Intranet.** An intranet allows for employees to access information easily, reducing the amount of email sent looking for documents. If company information is easily accessible this should reduce the need for unnecessary internal communication.

Use a **team task management/project management tool** such as Teamwork.com Asana.com or Trello.com Using one of these tools will eliminate the need to email your team members for updates and queries. All team conversations will take place within the tool.

Suggest **email free days**, many companies use Friday as their internal email free day, this shows employees how they can actually live without internal email and that sometimes issues can be solved more quickly by picking up the phone or by walking to the person's desk

The document should include best practise around incoming email, how to respond and communicate effective with this mode of communication. By educating employees at induction and ensuring they are familiar with the positive email habits of the company, this will help to maintain high levels of productivity and make for a distraction free workplace.

Conclusion

Having healthy email habits won't happen overnight, but by creating space for this system you will begin to work much more effectively than before. Over the years I have delivered many training sessions and helped many people with my productivity workflow coaching, I have received lots of positive feedback along the lines of:

 "I really like the way you have helped me organise my email, it's had a major impact on the way that I work"

"I love my clean inbox, it helps me to focus on the right things at the right time"

"I can't believe I have managed to reach inbox zero, it's so easy to maintain and makes such a difference to my daily productivity, thanks"

This stuff works, it transformed my life, helped me out of my period of stagnation and moved me into a phase of creativity and efficiency. It can do the same for you.

If you implement the advice in this book you will become calmer and more productive, and create the time to do more of the things you love.

If you think you or your company would benefit from working with me please get in touch.

I am available for speaking, training and coaching or a chai latte at my convenience.

You can also connect with me through

Twitter: @ciaraconlon

About Ciara

Ciara Conlon is a leadership coach, author and speaker who specialises in the areas of personal productivity and authentic leadership. Ciara is the author of two books on productivity; *Chaos to Control, a practical guide to getting things done* and *Productivity for Dummies*. Coming from total chaos, Ciara has developed strategies to help her find time to work, write, rest and play, all before breakfast.

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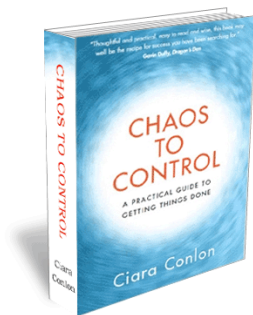
For further reading check out my books

Chaos to Control & Productivity for Dummies

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