Manage Your Time:

According to Forbes Magazine, business leaders receive at least 200 emails a day on average, and spend about two-and-a-half hours reading and replying to messages? Don't you have something better to do?

I'd like to share with you some tips that have made a huge difference for the clients I work with and will make your time spent in email way more efficient and less intrusive.

Goal: Get Radical

1. Avoid distraction:
- Turning off email notifications eliminates interruptions and allows you to focus on the task at hand
- However, you can (and should) leave notifications on for task reminders
- If you really want to be radical, close the app! Blocking time in your calendar, 3-4 times a day, to process messages ensures you will see new messages and be able to respond promptly

Goal: Inbox Zero

2. Process your messages:
- If the message contains information you will use repeatedly, file it in a reference folder and set rules or filters the move them automatically
- If it's material that you are interested in reading, file it in your Reading folder, then schedule reading time in your calendar
- Respond to invitations and messages that will take less than 2 minutes

- For the rest of your messages, prioritize those that need to be dealt with right away; for those that can wait until later, book time in your calendar to handle them
- Now, focus on your priority items:
    - Add it to your task list, or to your calendar if there's a deadline
    - If it's a project (e.g., requires more than one action or task to accomplish your goal), add it to your Project Manager app
- Delete messages that are no longer relevant, file processed messages in subfolders, and archive messages that must be kept for legal reasons

Goal: Inbox Organized

Email can waste a lot of your time. Responding to messages on the fly is one way, but another is wading through a cluttered inbox trying to find the one message your client is referring to. How good would it be if you could grab the relevant email exactly when you needed it most?

3. Sort:
- Tag your messages. With folders, you have to choose where to file your messages, for example between "vendor" and "project" but not both. But with tags, you can use both terms, avoid duplicating the message and wondering which one you chose.
    - How to Tag Your Emails
- Flag urgent messages. Using a flag on messages means you can filter them instantly, which is great when you're waiting for a response and you want to keep it on your radar
- Archiving older messages Archiving keeps your inbox clean and up to date, ensures messages aren't deleted or lost and still allows you access that information.

> **Email applications are not filing systems.**
>
> Whether you prefer to move messages out of your inbox or sort them within your inbox, make it a habit of archiving old messages. Too many messages in your inbox can inhibit your ability to send or receive messages.

Goal: Clarity

Have you ever sent an email that was addressed to the wrong person? Or contained part of another email that had information you really didn't want them to see?

We've all made mistakes like this, but how great would it be to have a system in place designed to ensure that never happens again?

4. Composing messages:
- When composing an email, leave off the recipient's email address; that way a half-finished message won't be sent by mistake. You can also save the message and come back to it later
- If you want to ensure the message won't be misconstrued, ask someone else to read it and give you feedback
- Always re-read your email before sending it, preferably out loud. Reading it out loud forces you to slow down and really hear what was written and helps identify spelling mistakes
- If you find you are writing the same message repeatedly, create a template. Templates are a speedy way to send things like invoices and you can still customize the message
    - How to create a template in Gmail
    - How to create a template in Outlook
- When arranging meeting times, always offer at least 3 day/time options to minimize the number of back-and-forth messages

5. Signatures
- Ensure your signature is included, not only when initiating contact, but when replying to or forwarding messages; using a signature for all messages not only helps show your email is not spam, but makes you look more professional
- You can create a variety of signatures, depending on the information you want to provide and your target audience
- Include your name, your company name, email address (because sometimes a forwarded email will only display a name), contact phone number, logo, website and any social media links
    - Add a signature in Gmail
    - Add a signature in Outlook
- Seeing your contact information repeatedly helps keep you top of mind and encourages prospects to check out what you offer

Did you find some useful tips?

Visit me at ProTem Executive Assistance or contact me at Karen Mrkonjic.