

Productive Communications

**How to conquer email reduce
overwhelm and get more
done!**



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Conquer Email: Reduce Overwhelm and Maximize Productivity

Email Management

Are you overwhelmed with the volume of email you receive on a daily basis?

Do you use the email inbox as a to do list?

Do you wonder if you will ever get through your inbox?

If you answered yes to any of these questions then maybe you need an email intervention?

You are not alone, many people feel overwhelmed by the volume of email they receive and the constant seduction of clearing their inbox.

Many leaders believe if they can just answer one more email, clear one more response, finalize one more invitation then they will feel better. Sorry folks... that is not the case, that is just like a dog chasing their tail... a waste of time.

As a productivity expert I can tell you no matter where I am in the world, your emails will keep coming. You can chase after the elusive clear inbox or you can learn to maximize your productivity by Folding Time™ and applying the strategies outlined in this eBook.

I loved the [Email Charter](#) designed by Chris Anderson and found on TED.com – it could help you design yours.



Email management requires you to Fold Time™

In one of our productivity books Folding Time™ we declare time management no longer works! Time management is out the window; the secret of productivity is to Fold Time™ – achieve twice as much in half the amount of time. If you would like a copy of this book contact office or www.neenjames.com

- Productivity is more essential now our lives are so busy.
- We need to achieve twice as much with half the amount of resources, sometimes with people with half the experience.
- Social media requires us to be more connected.
- People seek thought leaders... not thought repeaters.

Productivity is not a new concept; it seems more essential given our busy lives.

You might occasionally hear people reminisce about the "good old days" of life before email. There are some people in the workplace who remember when faxes were introduced to the environment... then along came email, telecommuting, and technology in general. All of these technologies were supposed to be time saving and allow us more "free time". Did you know that when the personal computer was invented, one of the goals of this was to allow people to have more vacation time because systems and processes would be automated?

We need to have conversations about why it is now (more than ever before), it is important to Fold Time™? We are all being asked to achieve twice as much with half the time, half the resources and sometimes with people with half the experience.

The global economy has changed, emerging technologies have impacted our everyday activities and the world feels like it has become smaller. Expectations for our workflow and the projects and deliverables have increased from our leaders and also from our own expectations of ourselves. Technology has forever changed our world and our work, and now we need much tighter guidelines for work boundaries so we can enjoy both personal and recovery time.



People are exhausted by the amount of information available. **It is not the information age; it is the age of over-information!** People want to have information condensed into manageable bite sized pieces. We crave tweets for their simplicity and brevity. That's why it is essential to manage your email!

Why is Folding Time™ now important?

Illnesses like heart disease, diabetes, and stress related illnesses are on the rise.

People are not investing in recovery time even though they live their lives connected twenty-four/seven. In the USA many companies expect that when you take vacation you will still "check in" to your email and "dial in" to teleconferences so you can stay on top of your role while you are supposedly relaxing. This is not a productive operating principle, and human resource departments are being flooded with complaints of burned out, unhappy workers as a result.

As a leader, your responsibility is to help your team understand the fundamentals of productive communications so they can get more done during their work hours -- so they can go home and get on with what energizes them.

We need an etiquette revolution

Today's fast paced world demands differentiation between etiquette of technology, social media and email etiquette.

It's not old irrelevant etiquette; it's an etiquette revolution.

In the 1970's platform shoes hit the fashion scene. These shoes and their fabulous designs were one of the most memorable fashion statements of the era. As these shoes have reentered fashions over the years, they have evolved and become a staple of many women's shoe wardrobes.

Do you remember those bell-bottom jeans from the same era? I always giggle when see photos of them and yet -- the bootleg jeans we all now wear are the evolution of the bell-bottom jeans.



Emily Post born in 1872 wrote the rules of etiquette in her book *Etiquette in Society, in Business, in Politics at Home* (more commonly referenced as simply *Etiquette*) first published in 1922, – she was right back then and many of her guidelines are relevant for today.

June Cleaver (an iconic character in American television history) wore pearls and fabulous shoes to clean her house! Seriously... what woman today does that?

Just as fashion has evolved, so has our digital communications including social media and email and we need to ensure we understand the etiquette revolution.

I have heard, "If you suck in real life you will suck online."

It is the evolution of formal to the familiar. We have established personal brands and become more accessible to a global community.

People want to interact with those who are fun, authentic and familiar. People want social sharing.

Social media and email gives everyone a voice, a right to be heard, a platform to share opinions. We need to be aware that this accessibility of information also requires us to be even more diligent with Folding Time™. We need to avoid wasting time and engage in conversations with a different level of frequency.

We need to start forgiving text speak and spelling errors in email and focus on message and context. People demand social sharing now.

We need to focus on the content of our character and the character of our content.

People seek thought leaders in their area of expertise, not thought repeaters.

Folding Time™ is essential now to achieve twice as effective communication in half the time.



History of email

Ray Tomlinson is credited with creating email in 1972. He picked the @ symbol from the computer keyboard to denote sending messages from one computer to another – and both users had to be online at the same time – so I guess this is where it all started?

Larry Roberts is then known as the guy who invented email folders for his boss to sort his messages. In 1975 John Vital developed software to organize email. By 1976... email had taken off!

When email was originally designed I wonder if Mr. Tomlinson knew it might become one of the most used forms of communication, (maybe even the worst used and abused forms of communication). Originally it was just like leaving a message for someone on their desk. It wasn't more than a file directory and it put a message in someone's directory in a spot where users could see it when they logged in.

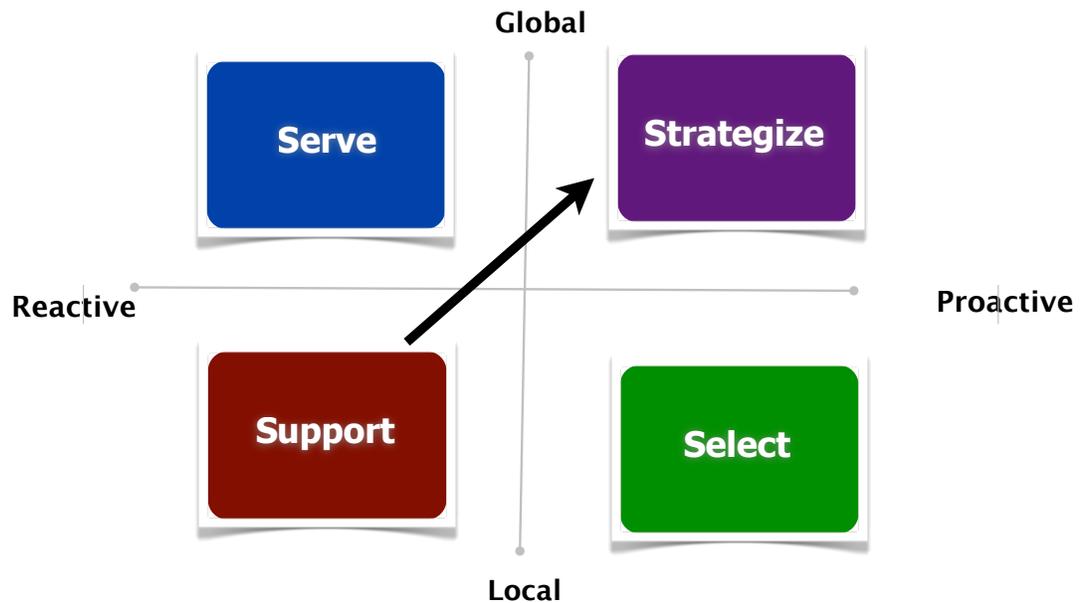
Email was originally designed to increase communication effectiveness. It was a tool to do your job... some days it feels like THE job.

In Tim Ferris' book the 4-Hour Work Week, he shares that he only completes email for one hour per week to allow him to focus on the big items. While this is NOT practical for the rest of the world who aren't Tim Ferris, however I like the idea of just setting a small amount of time aside to complete email. Could you focus on your email for one hour a day? – how much more could you achieve?

Don't let email overwhelm you – by implementing these simple strategies you can conquer your email – get more done so you can get on with it! It is all about productive communications.



Productive Communications



How can you be more productive communicating on email?

When communicating you have an option to choose to react to all email messages and requests that are made of you... or to be proactive and take control of the messages you respond to or initiate.

Messages can come in the form of very detailed information (local) or more strategic direction (global). This distinction is important for leaders as many of your team are looking for guidance and advice on how to progress projects, increase sales, and achieve business objectives.

When an email enters your inbox you can choose to how to respond. Do you want to be in service (serve) of the person who sent it to you by responding with information that will move the strategy forward in a more big picture way or do you just react to what they need and guide (support) them with a detailed response so you can move it out of your inbox?

If you want to be more productive with your communication and focus on the big picture for your team you may want to be more selective (select) about which emails you respond to (which also means you may choose NOT to respond to every email in your inbox) and the most productive place to respond to is when you are able to proactively provide strategic direction (strategize).

To accelerate more productive communications consider your email responses to be more global (strategic) and proactive to add value to the business, to accelerate your objectives and especially beneficial to your recipient.

Serve your email recipient

These strategies will ensure you are able to react to the emails you receive and focus on the big picture.

Get to the point – no one likes long wordy emails – be concise, make your point and move on people... stop wasting time.

Use numbers – this might seem obvious however if you are posing questions in an email – number each question to make it easier for people to respond.

Don't copy the world – seriously... only send email to **relevant** people who will action it. If you copy multiple people on an email, list their names within the body of the email and action required and due date. People appreciate a direct approach.

Always use a greeting – take time to greet in email just like you do in person, systemize this as part of your email signature and that way it is always there.

Never reply mad – if you are angry or upset step away from the keyboard or put down your cell phone. It is never professional to send something when you are angry you won't achieve anything.



Support your email recipient

These strategies will ensure you are able to respond to the emails that you receive and provide the details people are requesting.

Don't return email – While this may not sound like supportive behavior, you don't need to reply to every single email you receive. You can simply press the delete key. I dare you. See what happens. At least 20% of your inbox does not require you to respond. Check your inbox and see if this is correct?.

Drag and drop – did you know if you highlight an email in your inbox using Outlook, you can drag it to create a new task, or a new contact, or a new calendar appointment? This simple action will save you an enormous amount of time.

Don't reply all – this should be illegal! Be diligent with who needs to be copied on the email and only include people who can take action or need to be informed in the email conversation.

Decline invitations – when offered an opportunity or an invitation you know you are NOT going to want to attend or you are unavailable – decline immediately on email – don't allow the information to sit in your inbox, action immediately.

Virtual files. Set up folders in your email to file important information you have read or actioned and want to keep for future reference. These folders might mirror your hard-copy files to make it easy for you to cross-reference printed and online information relating to a particular subject.

Check your outbox daily – sometimes we get distracted or interrupted when we are creating an email. Make a point to always check your email before you leave the office or sign off for the day to ensure every email you think you sent really left your outbox.

Diligently Use “Out of Office”– if you are unable to respond to emails or you will be out of your office for a long period of time, set up an out of office auto responder for your email. This manages others expectations about response times.



Select strategies for email recipients

These strategies will ensure you are proactively responding to emails with more focus on strategy.

Include a call to action – if you are sending an email make sure you know what the next steps are and make them obvious – put your call to action at the front of the email, not the end.

Include timeframes – within the email body use specific timelines and dates. Avoid misinterpretation.

Allocate 15 minutes extra every Friday – spend time cleaning up, file actioned emails you want to still keep and delete others.

Write in bullet points – keep your sentences short and less than 15 words per sentence.

Do it later – If someone needs an ‘urgent’ response however you can’t get to it for a while, drop them a note and share you will find the answer later and provide a specific timeframe.

Use a visual recognition system – color code so at a glance you respond to your inbox quickly to most important first. Learn this skill to quickly identify at a glance which emails require your immediate attention. Your color-coding might mirror your hard copy filing system while adding new color categories for emails from friends and family.

Turn off bells, whistles and envelopes ... any kind of reminder or sound – mute it immediately. These constant interruptions distract you and decrease your effectiveness.

Check email 3–4 times per day ... not all day! Significant time is wasted responding to emails throughout the day, focus energy on checking and responding only 3–4 times a day, once when you start your day, after lunch then one hour before you leave your office. This will ensure you can handle important communication in a timely manner.



Delete once actioned – don't let emails stay in your inbox, this is not your to-do list. Once actioned: delete. If you need to take action from the email, schedule time to complete the task and then delete it.

Think and write in bullet points – keep sentences short and to the point. Don't use email to create long paragraphs or criticize performance.

Use an action oriented subject line – give people direction of what action you need them to take in your email heading. If you write it well you don't need to have text in the body of the email.

Use your subject line as your email body – if you can request or write in the subject line, don't add a body – use EOM (end of message) to indicate that's it.

Never send FYI emails – FYI is lazy! If you are going to request people's time by sending them an email ensure you are very clear within the body of the email text what ACTION you require them to take. Never send FYI, it is lazy and unproductive communication style. In our office FYI emails are deleted immediately.

Avoid 'Thank You' – the game of 'thank you' tennis where thank you emails went back and forth clogging up your inbox, try this simple closing in your email signature 'thank you in advance for your help/assistance'.

Emails are permanent – once you have sent an email it can be shared, printed, filed but not deleted. Be aware of the content of your emails can also be used in a court of law.

Read and delete. People keep emails – set yourself guidelines for what to keep and delete the rest once read or actioned. And, don't keep emails in your inbox – they'll only make you feel like you have more work than you really do and increase the chances you'll overlook something that needs your attention. Be disciplined: read, action then file or delete.

Don't get overwhelmed – get control of your email inbox today and maximize your productivity with these strategies.



Strategize for email recipients

These strategies will ensure you are responding in a strategic way that proactively moves the business and conversation forward.

Create attention grabbing subject lines – use action oriented language and fun attention grabbing statements. Don't use old style, boring subject headings.

Answer what, who, how and why – when crafting your response, consider if you have answered these questions for your receiver.

Choose your words carefully – communicate in language that will be received well – consider your audience and what is important to them.

Talk time – never use terms like close of business or urgent.... These terms are pointless. Instead of close of business specify a time '5 pm EST' instead of urgent use language that explains why it is a priority.

Conquer in 15 minutes – invest 15 dedicated (not multi-tasking) minutes to your email in 3-4 scheduled times through the day. Focus, read, action, delete!

Don't make email more important than people – if the subject of your communication requires interaction consider if it is the best format or would a short call or meeting have more impact? Also don't answer email if you are with someone who deserves your attention too!

Remember screen size has decreased – people don't all read emails on a computer... mostly on smart phones at red lights (we are sure you don't email and drive... right). Keep message short!

Schedule email time. Email messages popping into your inbox all day long can be an enormous distraction, particularly if your email is set to alert you every time new mail arrives. To check in on your emails and respond to them as they arrive not only distracts you from whatever tasks or projects you are working on but can rob you of an entire day, responding to other people's needs while your own are neglected. Schedule 3-4 times a day for 15 minutes to check and respond to emails rather than constantly looking-in on your inbox or being bounced there by your email program with every new message.



Master email functionality– invest time learning email functionality and short cuts to maximize email.

Set up Email rules. Establish rules for incoming email to help you sort the legitimate messages from the spam, jokes and junk. Your email software can help you, for example, to send spam messages directly to your trash, or to send e-zines or newsletters you subscribe to directly to an allocated reading folder.

Use an electronic signature. Use your email program to create an email signature block that will automatically attach to all of your outgoing messages; it's a little like an email letterhead. It saves you the effort of including your contact information every time and brings a professional touch to your communications. You might simply include your name, business name, contact details and website or you might also include a sentence or two about your business, a special promotion you are running with a link to your website, or even a favorite funny or inspirational quote.

Unsubscribe! Get off the lists of emails you never read or lists you don't want to be on, eliminate messages you won't read.

So with all these strategies which two will you choose to apply today? This week? In the next 30 days? Take action today!



Thought Leaders Manage Email

Many years ago I became involved in an education company that is impacting the planet. Thought Leaders Global www.thoughtleadesglobal.com helps clever people become commercially smart. Using your expertise, we help people capture, package and deliver thought leadership for commercial success. This community is full of brilliant minds changing the planet through work and projects. Brilliant minds, while creative, also need discipline and focus to get more done and be productive communicators.

As a thought leader in the area of productivity, I became obsessed with helping clever people get more done so they could create more significant moments in their lives. Some of our clients have seen increases in their personal productivity ranging from 30 - 80% -- and one public relations firm we worked with increased their book of business by 100%! What impresses us about our clients is that they learn to get more done at work so they can go home and deepen their relationships with those they love, pursue passions they had only ever dreamed of, take vacations they have never thought possible - all because they learned how to Fold Time™. Learning to manage your email will help you feel more productive at work and at home.

When sharing Folding Time™ strategies we have a global perspective (being an Aussie, living in the USA and speaking around the globe) combined with the knowledge that it is more than time management - it is about Folding Time™ to be productive: being accountable, fully engaged and leveraging every opportunity.

We know you will enjoy the practical, implementable strategies for everyday activities -- so you can personally can get more done, spend more time with people you love, and remember why you do what you do!

Often it is people who are already good time managers that buy ebooks like this one. If that is you - awesome! If not, you might have bought this ebook because you desperately want to reduce your sense of overwhelm and change your chaos to calm - welcome! Regardless of the situation you find yourself in, we hope you enjoy scanning the pages of this eBook and finding ideas that you can apply every day!



After all, don't we all want to be able to get more done so we can spend more time with the people we care about?

The secret to managing your email is to do something, anything! Don't just sit there thinking about what you read and what that means to you – do something, anything!

We all need to be more accountable for our time, engage our attention and leverage our energy. When you combine these vital success filters you are able to ensure that every project you invest in you can approach with full integrity and you will have an impact on the planet.

Don't wait.

Take action.

Do something now.

People that talk about doing things but never get around to it are not productive communicators. They are wasting time. Don't be that person.

Choose to take action on what you have read.

Choose to dial down your stress. Allow yourself time.

Most people want a secret formula, a short cut (like a crash diet). There isn't a crash diet or secret formula or magic pill for managing email.

It is all about the choices you make. Choose to take action today.

We can help you personally in your quest to conquer your email and maximize productivity.

Maybe you want to move ahead but you are unsure what is the right action plan for you? Where do you start? We can help you with that.



Maybe you need to incorporate more accountability into your life and you want to work with a coach who can help you do that. Maybe you want an accelerated experience and need a mentor to guide you through, or maybe your team needs a speaker for their annual event to inspire them to take action and Fold Time™ at your organization.

Whether you are an individual or an organization wanting to Fold Time™ or conquer email once and for all, we can help you.

Please contact our office and our super fabulous team would be delighted to assist you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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Other titles by Neen James

Secrets of Super-Productivity: How to Achieve Amazing Things in Your Work Life

Folding Time™: How to Achieve Twice As Much in Half The Time

Other books and CD programs Neen James has contributed to:

How to Be a Productive Road Warrior

Secrets of Super-Productivity Toolkit for Work and Home

Balance: Real life strategies for Work-life balance

Network or Perish

Strategic Networking

6 Essentials for Success in Business and Life

How to Run a Successful Home Based Business

Thought Leaders Ideas: Volume 3

Black Belt Selling

Other programs and keynotes by Neen James:

Folding Time™: Achieve twice as much in half the time

Productive leaders are thought leaders

Women in Thought Leadership: How to sell your expertise

Productive Communications: How to accelerate your presentations and impact

