# 6 Quick Tips for Cleaning an Out-of-Control Inbox

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It happens to all of us: your emails gradually pile up into a jumbling, Jenga-like mass. With all the subscriptions, newsletters, personal messages, spam and work-related emails, if you decide to address just one, the rest will come tumbling down on top of you. Besides, you're guaranteed to receive just as much the following day …

So why bother?

Well, believe it or not, this is a completely normal problem. The average person receives 68 work-related emails in their inbox every day, most of which require a response.

Not only is the amount of emails you receive taxing, but so is the time spent going through them. Employees spend up to 13 hours a week attempting to manage their email overload, and in a survey of 3,200 workers, one in five respondents say they waste the most time on email. Luckily, this problem has a solution.

You can clean up your inbox and boost productivity by implementing these six practical tips:

## 1. Disregard filing entirely.

Many believe this to be a practical way to organize their emails, but for the majority who receive over a hundred emails

per day, it quickly becomes a laborious process. The time spent on setting up and maintaining folders could more effectively be spent on addressing the emails that require an immediate response.

Using the folder system to organize and find emails wastes 14 minutes per day. The time you previously wasted scrolling through emails in your inbox has now transferred to time wasted scrolling through folders to find emails …

In other words, it’s pointless.

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## 2. Two words: archive it.

Have you read an email, don’t want to delete it, but don’t want it lingering around in your inbox?

Archive it. This is a simpler and faster alternative to creating folders. Not only does archiving allow you to remove an email from your inbox and store them in an accessible location, it allows you to divide your inbox into just two groups: unread (new emails) and urgent (emails that need an immediate response).

Now, you can locate a specific email much faster than sorting through a bunch of nonsense.

## 3. Develop your search skills.

Use the search option to find specific emails. This significantly cuts down on wasted time.

Try searching by the sender of the email. A list of all emails from that person will pop up in a matter of seconds. Don’t remember who sent it? Searching by keywords directs you to every email that addresses that subject. Only remember the

attachment that is included in the email? You can search for that, too, by typing in the file type: PDF, JPEG, PNG, Docx, Pages, Zip, etc.

## 4. Stop using email as a to-do list.

Using email for task management can be one of the biggest culprits for out-of-control inboxes. When addressing the issue of email and task management being meshed together, Alexandra Samuel notes, “If you’re conflating email and task management, then the job of communicating – reading and replying to your messages – gets bogged down by all the emails you leave sitting in your inbox simply so you won’t forget to address them. This approach also makes managing your to-do-list problematic: When you need to quickly identify the right task to take on next, nothing slows you down like diving into your inbox to scroll through old messages.”

Not only is it time-consuming going back and forth between email and your job, but it can also drain any desire to be productive. Besides, enough time is already wasted when sorting through emails in your inbox, so why bother adding fuel to the fire?

To put it simply, email should be used for communication and communication only.

Separating email from task management can increase productivity in the work environment by allowing employees to focus on the task at hand.

## 5. Unsubscribe from unnecessary email lists.

First off, unsubscribing is not the same thing as deleting.

Deleting emails from subscribed lists is like attempting to get rid of dust: the second you clean it up, it comes back.

Everyone has made the mistake of signing up for one too many lists. Take some time to go through and unsubscribe from lists you deem unnecessary. If you're unsure whether to unsubscribe from a particular list, do it anyway.

If you don't have the time to go on an un-subscription spree, you can speed up the process by using unsubscribe services. UnrollMe, for example, is a secure and efficient app that filters through your inbox, displays a list of all your subscriptions and gives you the option to instantly unsubscribe – all with one click. This will help immensely in cleaning up your inbox and getting rid of future clutter.

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# 6. Do a little tidying up.

Now that you've unsubscribed from receiving future irrelevant emails, you can focus your attention on getting rid of the older emails that are blocking up your inbox.

Go through your inbox and delete anything over 30 days old. If you're unsure of whether to keep or delete an email, simply archive it so you can refer back to it for later use.

Perhaps one of the most rewarding things is seeing the fruits of one's labor: for example, taking in the cleanliness of a space that has just been completely decluttered. The same is true for email.

Email is one of the key tools in every entrepreneur's tool belt. An out-of-control inbox can do more harm to your business than most people think. Making sure your inbox remains spic and span and free of clutter is crucial to the success of your business.

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