My New Automated Email Workflow

In the past months I've struggled with email.

Some days I was afraid to open my inbox because I knew that 50+ messages were there, waiting for me to take action. As the days passed, and I procrastinated, the unread email count increased and became a real problem.

That situation led to missing important emails because some of them got lost in the chaotic inbox. But more importantly, **I started to feel anxious and stressed.**

This tweet from @levelsio describes exactly how I was feeling:

Unlike Pieter, I didn't want to quit email, but it was obvious that I had to do something to solve my unsustainable email situation.

Goals and challenges

My goal was to reduce to maximum the number of emails I had to process every day and invest the minimum possible time doing so.

The problem was that my system was already pretty much automated and optimized, and I still got around 30 emails per day.

If I wanted to succeed, I had to start from scratch and approach the problem from a new perspective.

My new email workflow

My new email workflow is based on establishing different email groups.

Each incoming email is automatically assigned to a group of emails.

I check these email groups at different times depending on their priority.

It’s a nearly notifications-free system—I only get phone notifications for my high priority email group.

Basic email groups

I’ve defined the following email groups. (I have some other very specific groups to my case, but I will omit them for clarity’s sake.)

Work email

Assignments, clients communication and other work-related email.
Priority: Highest. I check this group several times a day.
Notifications: Enabled (only when they are assignments).

Blog & other side projects emails

Emails from readers, blog contacts, and any other emails from my side projects.
Priority: Medium. I check this group once a day, or every two days.
Notifications: Disabled.

Personal email

Emails from friends, family, and any other personal matters.
Priority: Medium. I check this group once a day, or every two days.
Notifications: Disabled.

Apps

Emails from websites, apps, and other automated emails.
Priority: Low. I check this group twice or three times a week,

unless I need to take action (for example when I need to confirm registration to a website or I buy something online and have to download immediately).
Notifications: Disabled.

Newsletters & other subscriptions

Newsletters I'm subscribed to, summary weekly emails from websites and apps, and other automated periodic emails.
Priority: Low. I check this group once a week.
Notifications: Disabled.

How the email grouping work

Each email group operates using its own email address. For instance, my work email is *magoz@magoz.is*, my blog email is *readers@magoz.is*, my personal email is *m@magoz.is*, and so on.

All my email addresses are centralized to the same Google account using G Suite (formerly known as Google Apps). And I can create as many additional emails as I want.

If you use a Gmail address, you can create an infinite number of secondary emails addresses without the need of creating additional accounts.

Let's say that your email address is *yourname@gmail.com* and you want to have an additional email address for newsletters.

To use the new additional account you only have to add *+newsletters* in between *yourname* and *@gmail.com*, resulting *yourname+newsletters@gmail.com*.

You will receive all the upcoming email in your *yourname@gmail.com* inbox, but it will appear to be sent to *yourname+newsletters@gmail.com*.

It works like magic and it doesn't require any registration or configuration.
You can create as many additional Gmail addresses as you want.

Automatic email grouping using filters

Having several email addresses allows me to create **filters that categorize every incoming email automatically.**

For instance, all the email sent to *m@magoz.is* is automatically labeled as *personal* using a filter.

If you are not familiar with Gmail filters, you can read more here.



Choose how often my emails appear in my inbox

As I use Inbox by Google, I can bundle my email groups (labels) to show up in my inbox immediately, once a day or once a week.

It means that if someone sends me an email to *m@magoz.is*, **I won't see that email in my inbox until the next day**. The same applies to each email group, following the rules I described in the previous section.

If I need to, I always can access the "hidden" messages before they show up in my inbox by going to *Gmail > All Mail.*



Putting all together

The combination of defining email groups, having custom email addresses, using Gmail filters, Keywords, and Gmail Search Operators allows me to create **complex and powerful rules that automate filter all my incoming email.**

For instance, I can add exceptions to people that email me at the wrong address, creating custom alerts on my phone depending on certain emails, and much more.

I won’t discuss them in this article, but let me know in the comments if you are interested, and I might write another article about it.

Future improvements

My new email system works much better than the old one, but I believe it still can be improved.

My emails tend to pile up when I travel and I can’t process them as usual. I could set up a smart autoresponder based on the different email groups.

For instance, I could set up automated email reply to all the new assignments saying that it might take me some extra time for me to reply. The email could also offer them an additional email address that I can access immediately if the assignment is a rush one.

Another improvement could be an autoresponder for my personal address with a link to my Nomadlist profile that points the city where I’m at the moment.

This is theoretically possible but it requires some workarounds and has some caveats. If implemented it could be extremely useful.

I will keep you posted if I make some progress!

Conclusions

Email is one of the most powerful communication tools we have. But if we don’t control it, it can become a real problem.

My new automated email workflow allows me to be more efficient and reduce the stress caused by the number of emails I receive every day.

And because of its automated nature, I can connect it with

other services, resulting in a powerful workflow, with many practical possibilities.

I hope this article helps you to improve your email workflow and consider new options and improvements if you are suffering from the challenge of keeping up with email.

If you have any questions or want me to develop some of the concepts, as always, I would love to hear your comments !