

Time management

If your email inbox is out of control, what can you do to organise it, gain more control and improve your responses?

It's believed that 247m emails are sent on average per day - no wonder you voted email your number one workplace distraction in the recent webinar on time management.

So how can you better manage emails? There are two sides to this - the first is becoming more efficient at dealing with your inbox. Techniques here include turning off the automatic notifications, only looking at emails two or three times a day and making use of the colour-flagging functions to categorise emails according to importance and/or urgency. And if you haven't tried any of these, give them a go.

The second approach is to reduce the number you get in the first place. You could certainly become more ruthless in unsubscribing. I'm a sucker for signing up to email bulletins or feeds and then losing interest in the content. Every so

often I'll simply sort my inbox by sender to see how many come from these third parties. It doesn't take long to find the unsubscribe button and it really does reduce the volume coming in. Obviously I never need to do this with my ICAEW emails!

Some companies have taken dealing with email addiction a step further and actually ban internal emails at certain times of the week. The two effects are that staff actually talk to each other rather than relying on email and, of course, it reduces distractions so they can get on with all those important tasks on their to-do lists.

And if like me, you find that the same one or two tasks make repeated appearances on your to-do lists then I have one word for you - BANJO. My first manager taught me this one and it is quite simply a reminder to find an hour every few days to BANJO - Bang A Nasty Job Off. Typically, there'll

Some companies ban internal emails at certain times of the week... so staff actually talk to each other

always be a few things you know you need to do but would rather not. They may involve a little bit of extra effort, a difficult conversation with someone or just going outside your comfort zone. However my experience is that if you do apply yourself to it, it's never as bad as you thought it would be and gives you a tremendous sense of achievement - and dare I say smugness - for the rest of the day. Good luck. ■



Angus Farr FCA MCIPD
Director, Training Counts

There'll always be a few things you need to do but would rather not. My experience is that if you apply yourself to it, it's never as bad as you thought it would be

