

## **Working Remotely: Tip of the Week**

### **February 15, 2021**

### **Resolve to Manage Your Email!**

This tip was requested by Kathleen Snyder, Assistant Professor of Nursing. "I find myself responding to emails constantly and then stressed [because] I'm not getting any 'real' work done."

Are you saying the same thing? As one year of remote working is around-the-corner, our email inboxes are growing like weeds. Pull those weeds and control them instead of them controlling you.

1. Acknowledge the reality. Especially in the remote environment, email has become significantly more important and dominant in our work environment. People would drop by our office or work space and ask a question; we would have conversations before or after a meeting, and even have a quick exchange at the coffee maker, vending machine, or restroom. Now, we either Zoom or email, which become fatiguing. We see it as preventing us from doing our "real" work. However, it is our means for getting work done.
2. Schedule time for email and work projects. "Multitasking" used to be a buzzword and a search word on resumes. Research has shown, however, that humans cannot multitask: rather, we switch back-and-forth from one item to the other, which is neither productive nor efficient. When distracted, it takes about 20 minutes to refocus and re-engage in the task-at-hand. Therefore, instead of responding to each email as it arrives, schedule dedicated time every day to processing email. Likewise, schedule time every day to work on specific tasks. It helps to focus on what you do and only what you do.
3. Do not check your email as your first task of the day. Instead, check your calendar to remind yourself of commitments you have that day. You can then create time around those commitments for other tasks like responding to emails. For example, if you check your calendar and see you have an important meeting at 9:30 a.m. for which you need to present your recommendations, use the time before the meeting to make sure you are prepared. Review your notes and slides (if using), and rehearse your presentation. If you begin with your email, one or more might just take you "down the rabbit hole," and you might realize you are not ready at 9:30. Likewise, if you see you have an entire morning without appointments, you might decide to tackle that project due soon for the first two hours and then respond to email.

If you are ready to resolve to manage your email, you might want to participate in “Getting Things Done,” an eight-hour class delivered live online as four two-hour classes over four days. Look for future offerings of the class. You may also want to read a related article from the Harvard Business Review.

For more Tips on working remotely, please visit <https://bit.ly/mc-remote-working-e> and watch for the next tip on March 1, 2021.

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