



Unread and Dread: Taming the Inbox Beast

Emails are central to business communication, but they often become a major drain on time. In a fast-paced environment like ours, the sheer volume of emails we receive can be overwhelming. Every message demands attention—reading, replying, or taking action—and this process can quickly consume more time than we realize.

The primary challenge lies in the lack of clarity and purpose behind many emails. Too often, messages are sent without a clear objective, to the wrong recipients, or with vague instructions that require follow-up to clarify. This leads to wasted time, confusion, and inefficiency, which can hinder our internal workflows and affect external relationships.

To address this, we need to adopt more thoughtful email practices. Every email should fall into one of three categories: sharing essential information, requesting specific action, or seeking clarification. Before hitting “send,” it’s important to consider why the email is being sent, who truly needs to receive it, and what response or action is expected.

Clarity is key to effective communication. Subject lines should summarize the email’s purpose, and the message itself should get to the point quickly, using straightforward language. Overloading emails with unnecessary details or vague instructions only delays progress. Likewise, only those who need the information should be included in the email, and “Reply All” should be used sparingly.

Finally, emails should clearly outline the next steps when action is required. Specific instructions and deadlines help ensure tasks are completed efficiently. In some cases, it may be worth pausing to consider if an email is the best medium—some conversations are better suited to a quick call or face-to-face discussion.

Improving email etiquette is not just about saving time; it’s about fostering a culture of respect for our colleagues and customers’ energy and attention. Externally, it reinforces our professionalism and strengthens trust with customers and partners. By sending purposeful, clear, and concise emails, we can work more effectively as a team and create better outcomes for everyone.

And remember: don’t be the person who hits “Reply All” unnecessarily. No one wants that.

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