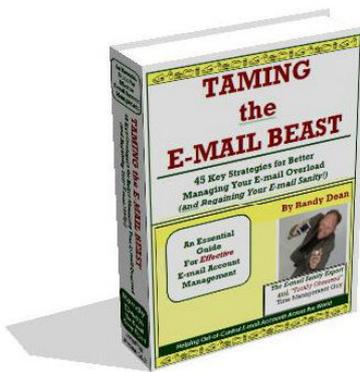


SPECIAL PREVIEW



Taming the E-mail Beast:

45 Key Strategies for Better Managing E-mail Overload (and Regaining Your E-mail Sanity)

By Randy Dean

The "Totally Obsessed" Time Management Guy and *E-mail Sanity Expert*

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Dear Friends,

*Thank you for requesting the draft sample chapters of my new book, **Taming the E-mail Beast: 45 Key Strategies for Better Managing E-mail Overload (and Regaining Your E-mail Sanity)**.*

This preview PDF provides you with not only the requested draft sample chapters, but also an overview of the projected table of contents of the publication, and a special offer (see the last page!) for those interested in pre-purchasing "Taming E-mail" prior to its formal publication date.



We recently completed a fully functional e-book version, and are now working to develop the paperback version (release in early 2008). It expands on the material shared in my popular speaking/training program on "Taming E-mail" that I have been leading all over the U.S. and even in Europe, and currently has 20 chapters and 45 "Key Strategies" for helping you to better manage your e-mail account and e-mail activities.

Coming in 2008, we're planning to do some related open enrollment courses starting here in the Midwest, as well as conducting a number of promotional activities including a related PR blitz, a book-signing/speaking tour, Internet-based promotional activities, and more.

I'm quite pleased with how this project has continued to take shape throughout, and am very excited about the positive benefits people are going to receive from the information contained within this book and affiliated information products: speaking/training programs, book reader's exclusive web site, related audio CD program, and possibly a related DVD training program. We're also planning to utilize multimedia as a way to

enhance reader value by demonstrating a number of the strategies in the book utilizing web-based screen capture videos.

*To give you a feel for the scope of the content, below, please find a tentative Table of Contents for the book. Your preview sample chapters follow, and then look to the end of this document for a special offer for those wanting to pre-order *Taming the E-mail Beast* prior to actual publication. I hope you enjoy!*

*Good luck with *Taming Your E-mail Beast*, and thank you for your interest.*

– Randy Dean

PS: Want to see what others are saying?

http://www.randalldean.com/taming_email_testimonials.html

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Author note: There may yet be another chapter or two that emerge prior to the actual business paperback publication of this book. I am currently researching a couple of additional topics that may be included in this book prior to publication. --RD

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Taming the E-mail Beast
45 Key Strategies for Better Managing Your E-mail Overload
(and Regaining Your E-mail Sanity!)

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Sample Chapters from: Taming the E-mail Beast

45 Key Strategies for Better Managing E-mail Overload (and Regaining Your E-mail Sanity!)

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Chapter 1: E-mail Insanity

So, how many e-mails do you have? How many are just sitting in your inbox—read or unread—but are just sitting there in your inbox unfiled? 50? 100? 500? 1,500? 15,000? And how many do you receive each day? 30? 50? 100? 200? And how much time do you spend each day just reading and responding to e-mails? One hour? Two hours? Four hours? More? If you are the average professional today, you spend two or more hours every day simply reading and responding to e-mails, and many people spend four or more hours per day on their e-mail. That is more than half of every workday!

For many of us, e-mail has gotten INSANE. It has become a “beast of monstrous proportions.” It has taken away our ability to get our job done, as well as our ability to enjoy our job. How did it become this way? How did such a promising productivity tool become the most hated scourge of many professionals? What can we do about it? Are there strategies that can help us tame this “beast,” and regain our sanity and productivity?

ABSOLUTELY!

With some sensible, proven strategies, some new habits, and some self-discipline, most professionals can regain control over their e-mail account(s). They can once again find the promise and utilize the power of this amazing productivity tool. And they can exert their influence on their co-workers, clients, and colleagues to help these people also regain some control over their e-mail beasts.

My name is Randy Dean. For the past 15+ years, I’ve been obsessed with time management and enhanced productivity. I’ve even become pretty well known all around the United States as the “Totally Obsessed” Time Management Guy, due to my humorous and highly useful training and speaking programs on time management, PDA usage, and related productivity topics. Over the last couple of years, I’ve also been getting known as the “E-mail Sanity Expert,” due to a new program on e-mail that I’ve been leading—specifically, how to better manage and control your professional and personal e-mail accounts.

My focus on this topic area has been no accident. I’ve been leading popular programs on time management principles and strategies—for companies and associations small and large—for more than a decade. E-mail has always been a topic that we discussed in detail. It has been a standard part of my “flagship” full-day time management training program for busy managers, professionals, and leaders. But over the last two to three years, I’ve seen firsthand how people’s relationship and satisfaction with e-mail has changed dramatically toward the negative. My e-mail segment has become the most energetic, passionate, and even combative part of my full-day training program. Right when my course attendees should be falling into a carb-induced food coma following lunch, they instead get fired up and downright cranky when we dive into the intensive strategies that I share on e-mail management.

I've talked with my course attendees, and they keep telling me that there is too much e-mail coming too fast all of the time. They are tiring of the "immediate response" culture that has developed in many organizations in regard to e-mail. With the newer e-mail-enabled wireless PDA and smartphone devices, many are reporting a "24/7/365" e-mail reality—it *never* stops! And they are also telling me they do not have the proper systems in place for handling or managing the massive flow. They are getting swamped—literally—by the sheer volume of messages they are receiving, and they are at a loss about what to do with all of it, or how to keep up with all of it. They are at wit's end, and are asking for (pleading for?) someone to help them find a path back to sanity. They want e-mail to be put back in its proper place—as an important yet not all-encompassing tool for enhanced communication and productivity. But they also desperately want this powerful tool to be used and administered in a much less reactive and "hyper-urgent" nature. They rightfully want to once again manage their work and their e-mail in a proactive and thoughtful manner.

It became very obvious to me that there was so much passion and need in this area that there was an opportunity to step up and develop a program that would help people once again regain their control (and their sanity) in regard to their e-mail accounts. (I found out that almost no one has had strategic e-mail management training—they've simply learned on an "ad hoc" basis over the years, thus allowing some truly sinister habits to appear.) They needed someone to develop tangible, easy-to-implement strategies—that can be put together into a comprehensive system—for sophisticated and yet very practical e-mail management, not just for individual performers, but also for working teams.

The *very* popular program on e-mail and information overload management that I've been leading throughout the country during the past couple of years has become what you are reading right now. Look at this book as your "map" to e-mail sanity. I've developed a regimen of 35 key e-mail sanity strategies and tips—strategies designed to "rein in" your e-mail beast. If you can follow most or all of these strategies, I'm quite certain that you can once again regain control of your account, and your career (not to mention your sanity!). Know now that the light is at the end of the tunnel—stay on this path and you will get there. We'll get your account back under control—one page at a time! Have fun taming that e-mail beast!

The Promise of E-mail

Do you remember when you first got your e-mail account? If you are like most professionals, you probably got that first account in the late '80s or early '90s. The Internet was brand new, and full of promise. Very few of us had any idea what it was going to turn into. So we started dipping our toes in the pool, and sending a few messages here and there—first to our co-workers, and then slowly out to our broader contact lists. We probably tested out an AOL account, and we just loved getting the "You've Got Mail!" message. It was so cool, and so new. Little did we know how this promising tool was going to develop.

Fast-forward to today. E-mail has become a ubiquitous business and personal tool for enhanced information sharing and communications. We now can correspond with individuals halfway around the world in a matter of seconds, and share not only basic text communications, but also

video, voice, and multimedia-enhanced messages. Via attachments, we can send entire books, file packets, reports, photos, music files, video files, and more. We can provide active links to specific Web pages and Web sites all over the cyber-universe, thus allowing individuals to use your e-mail message as a jumping-off point for a cyber-journey to places unknown and unexpected. If we so desire, our e-mail can allow us to reach just about anyone in the world anywhere, and at any time. And with e-mail's close cousin, instant messaging (IM for short), we can even use a version of e-mail that basically allows for real-time communications across vast distances, without the cost of wired telephone services.

In a corporate setting, e-mail has undoubtedly increased productivity and enhanced profitability. It has allowed individual workers in different locations to coordinate work and share information at a speed not imagined thirty years ago. This has allowed for a very sophisticated globalization of business efforts in a very short period of time. Now, due to e-mail and the many other forms of Web-based communications, a software engineer in Palo Alto can coordinate with a software coder in Mumbai, a hardware plant manager in Malaysia, and a marketing team in New York, thus allowing work to move forward as if each of these people worked in the next office over, rather than on the other side of the planet. We can communicate more efficiently with co-workers, stay closer to our clients and customers, maintain distant relationships with family and friends, and do all of these things in a quick and relatively painless manner.

The promise and capabilities of e-mail make it one of the most powerful productivity-enhancing tools ever created. It is one of a few new information and Internet-enabled technologies that have fundamentally changed the way we do business and live our personal lives. And we won't ever go back to the way it used to be.

However, there is a dark side to this amazing technology.

Most of us have never been formally trained on how to strategically and proactively administer and manage this tool. We've been expected to just sort of pick it up as we go. And that is just what we've done. We've picked up inefficient habits, lazy habits, and inconsiderate habits. We allow e-mail to run (ruin?) our day, rather than putting it into a proper place, perspective, and priority. We've allowed "urgent" messages from others to take us off of our required and desired paths. We've given our professional accounts to family and friends, and have burdened our accounts with tons of silly (sometimes funny) extra messages that cause us to work countless additional hours just to keep up. And many of us have seen our accounts get overwhelmed with spam and spoof e-mails, and are now spending too much time every day just hitting "delete" to get to the messages of real value and substance.

We've let our primary work account become an unmanageable beast. Many of us have hundreds (if not thousands) of unfiled messages just sitting in our inbox—some read, some unread—but all requiring some form of action (or deletion). Instead, we leave them sitting there—feeding, growing, stressing, and slowing—slowing our productivity, and reducing our ability to both enjoy and prosper in our work and our lives. We no longer know which messages are important and which ones aren't. And we can barely keep up with the new ones coming in every day, much less the old ones that have been there quite a while.

How do we regain control (and our sanity)? How do we tame our e-mail beast? How do we get back to the promise of this amazing productivity tool, and move away from the peril? These are the goals of this simple publication. Over the last few years, I've developed 35 key strategies for more effectively and efficiently managing your e-mail. I absolutely believe that if you incorporate most if not all of these strategies, you will find yourself significantly more in control of your e-mail account, and also more satisfied, productive, and fulfilled with your personal and professional lives. E-mail can (and should!) be a consistent productivity and life-enhancement technology; with some common sense and with a strategy, you can get it back to being just that. Let's start right now.

Some Quick Notes on the Structure of This Book

I don't want this to be a book that you just read and think about. Instead, I want this to be a book that you work with and interact with moving forward, thus allowing you to integrate the suggested strategies, new habits, and changes into your e-mail activities and your life. Because of this, I have structured this book with a few "value adds" that will hopefully allow you to better learn and retain the information shared.

1. ***End of Chapter Review Questions*** – Each chapter will end with a series of questions that will reiterate key concepts / ideas shared in that chapter. For example:
 - How long have we been using e-mail?
 - How much time does the average user spend per day reading and responding to e-mails?
 - What makes e-mail such a powerful tool for potential productivity?
 - Why has e-mail become an area of "pain" for many users and professionals?
2. ***Key Strategy Review*** – Each chapter will also end with a listing of the key e-mail sanity strategies shared in that chapter.
3. ***Video Tutorials*** – Book readers will also have access to a series of video tutorials that are available on an affiliated book reader's web page. Simply visit this page, and you will be able to launch these tutorials to see how to actually use the discussed technique or strategy. (Some things are obviously easier to learn by actually seeing them vs. just reading about them – especially when related to utilizing specific programs and functions within software.)

Following the Introduction, I will share strategies on how to better analyze exactly where your "e-mail pain" is coming from. I will lay out a rationale as to why you should seriously consider having multiple e-mail accounts – both to better help you maintain your focus and productivity when at work, and also to help mitigate the receipt of junk and SPAM e-mails. I also discuss a very powerful e-mail and office "clutter management" strategy that helps eliminate unnecessary workflow stoppages and releases stalled productivity (it is also great for helping to keep your e-mail account clean!)

We then discuss how to effectively prioritize both your messages and the related "to do's" living within your messages, so you can better identify and appropriately respond to messages with

inherent urgency and/or high importance. Following this discussion, I share with you my recommendation for the number of times per day the “average” professional should be checking their e-mail, and why getting into this routine makes great sense from a productivity enhancement and personal sanity perspective. And then, in the following chapter, I let you know why you should NEVER BLING. Curious what “blinging” is? Then go to the next page and read the next preview chapter!

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Check out some great **free bonuses** that are available for buyers of *Taming the E-mail Beast*. These bonuses are being provided by several other experts and thought leaders:

http://www.randalldean.com/te_expert_bonus.html

Chapter 6: Don't Bling!

This is going to be one of the shortest chapters in the book, but it is perhaps the most critical chapter when it comes to effectively managing e-mail and allowing yourself to be an effective, productive professional. The title of the chapter says it all—"Don't Bling."

Key Strategy #6: Don't Bling!

Now you are probably wondering, "What does 'bling' have to do with e-mail?" In this forum, it has no relation to the shiny body adornments worn by the hip-hop faithful.

I'm actually trying to add a new definition of this word to the English language. Here it is: Blinger—person who immediately jumps to the computer and drops everything he or she was looking at, working on, or giving focus to, upon hearing the little "bling" sound that the e-mail program makes to announce that there is a new e-mail message.

Are you a blinger? Do you immediately drop everything the minute you hear that little noise? Or if you're an AOL user, the minute you hear "You've got mail?" If you are dropping what you're doing and losing your focus and direction because you are constantly jumping over to check for new e-mail messages, you are, by your own design, filling your life and your consciousness with distractions and interruptions. You are also making it nearly impossible to get any kind of high-value work completed in a timely and focused manner.

Blinging is one of the worst professional habits you can possibly have when you're trying to be a productive, project-oriented professional. It is productivity poison—and that's not just according to me. Listen to the experts. Recently, the University of London's Institute of Psychiatry completed a study that showed that people who "blinged," meaning people who constantly checked their voice mail, snail mail, text messages—and of course e-mail—suffered a tangible short-term hit to their IQ of 10 points. Read that again: their IQ was effectively 10 points lower when they were going through intensive multi-tasking behavior (such as blinging) than when they were able to have a more normal level of focus.

To put that in perspective, the researchers noted that a 10-point drop in your IQ is roughly equivalent to missing an entire night's sleep, and is more than double the 4-point loss that you get from smoking marijuana. This is a fascinating statistic to me. Basically, if you are constantly checking your e-mail when messages come in, as well as taking phone calls, walk-ins, faxes, IM—whatever it is you're doing—you're making yourself more than twice as dumb as you would be if you just stopped and started smoking pot!

Please pause for a moment and reflect on this fact.

And here's an even more interesting fact: the researchers followed up and found that the effects of this "blinging behavior" are even worse for men than for women, because men have more difficulty multi-tasking than women do. So men are probably taking an even bigger temporary IQ hit than just 10 points. That means men especially need to be conscious of and cautious of

this multi-tasking/blinking behavior. Here's the good news—it is a *temporary* IQ loss. If you stop blinking, you can pretty much immediately regain your lost smarts!

Just as we discussed in the last chapter, there is absolutely no good reason to be a blinger unless you have people in your direct management/supervisory chain who have (unreasonable!) expectations for you to be constantly checking for their e-mails. That's the only *temporarily* valid reason to blink, but it is still a very damaging habit for long-term productivity and e-mail sanity. Blinking as a behavior is only appropriate until you are able to inform your supervisor about how damaging it is for your personal productivity. Once informed, your boss should encourage you to never blink again—and, yes, you should communicate with your supervisor to try to end this negative habit. Ask your boss to inform you by phone or in person if he or she sends you an urgent e-mail, so you don't have to scan every message coming in to see if it is from that person. Remind your supervisor that hundreds of other people send you e-mails, and that if you have to look at every message you receive from all of these senders just to see if it is an urgent message from him or her, you are likely spending all day constantly checking your e-mail and getting more stupid by the minute for it!

E-mail Is *Not* a Closed-Loop Communications Device

Here's another key reason to make this request: What if you aren't there? What if you cannot receive the message? What if you are out sick, or on vacation, or caught in traffic? What if your company's server malfunctions and the e-mail gets delayed, or, worse yet, never gets through? This stuff happens—*every day*. E-mail is not a closed-loop communications tool. When people assume it is, they can get burned! When they assume that every message they send seamlessly and immediately goes through and is automatically received and opened, they are assuming a lot! If the message truly is urgent, and it is not properly received, the sender is the one ultimately on the hook for not following through and confirming receipt. Just sending a message does not relieve your ownership and responsibility—you have to make sure it got there, make sure it was understood properly, and make sure the receiver took the appropriate designated action.

If those things don't happen, the sender *should* be the person to take the fall. (I know it doesn't work this way many times, but it should work this way!) If you send an urgent message via e-mail, you have a professional responsibility to close the communication loop.

So, if you think about it, asking this of your supervisor (or of anyone else you know that partakes in unreasonable e-mail behavior) is appropriate in just about any situation, and is something that all good managers/leaders should understand and honor. They want you to be at your best, most productive, and most intelligent. That allows you to do better work for them, which thus allows him or her to perform better also. Why would they ever continue a behavior that they know lessens the effectiveness and satisfaction of their employees (other than just being mean-spirited)? If they don't get it, let them borrow this book, and encourage them to read this chapter. Better yet, have them buy this book too!

Here's what I suggest: If you are working on your e-mail, work only on your e-mail and keep your focus on your e-mail. You can look at new messages, follow the Three-Minute Rule/priority

processing system we discussed earlier, and be critically efficient and effective at your e-mail administration.

If you hear that “bling” noise when you are in the middle of a project or activity, and it is not one of your designated times during the day to check your messages, resist the temptation! Stay on target, stay on task, and keep your focus on the project that you’re working on. And if that is almost impossible for you, and you just can’t help yourself, then: a) turn off that blinging sound; b) completely turn off the sound on your computer so you don’t hear any distracting noises; or c) don’t even have your e-mail tool open—keep it closed! Only open it up at the designated and specified times to check your messages.

If you can follow this one simple strategy, you’re going to suddenly find that your ability to focus and take deep action on important projects and tasks magnifies immensely. (I’m a big believer of the productivity value brought from *single-tasking*!) You will also find your satisfaction increasing and your stress on the job going down dramatically, because you can maintain your focus, which always helps with getting things done. More done, less stress—that’s a pretty good deal. So don’t bling!

If you have people in your office who are blingers—especially people who work for you—teach them to stop blinging also. Make it a requirement that they stop blinging. Make it something they can be reprimanded for if they are caught. You need to help them break this habit because their lack of performance and productivity will reflect poorly upon you as their manager. Your team will perform worse if they are consistently engaging in this behavior.

Of course, as mentioned in previous chapters, if the employees are customer service and client service representatives, their job potentially *is* to bling. But even if that is the case, these customer/client service professionals should still be taught to handle each e-mail one at a time, and also follow rigorously the three-minute and prioritization rules, rather than blinging between e-mails and losing significant productivity due to a lack of appropriate focus on the individual tasks at hand. If they follow this process, they will likely handle each individual e-mail more efficiently and effectively, and will be able to not only handle more e-mails throughout the day, but also will handle those e-mails more professionally. In essence, by following this recommended process, they are “micro-single-tasking”—treating each individual e-mail as a single task with singular focus and attention.

Blinging Bosses

If your supervisor is a chronic blinger, share with him or her—in a humorous way if you can—what I shared with you about how blinging makes you stupid (remember: “dumber than a pot smoker”). Let him or her know that you are reading this book, and that it opened your eyes because you realized that it was negatively affecting both your intelligence and your performance. Ideally, that will make your supervisor realize that this bad habit is also making him or her dumb. And it will obviously add fuel to your argument of why it is so critical that your supervisor not expect you to be immediately responsive with e-mail.

If you are the boss, and can get yourself into this “no blinging” habit, as well as get the people around you to adopt this habit, you will see not only a massive productivity improvement, but also a massive job satisfaction improvement for most of your employees, as they will no longer feel as rushed or harried and they may actually be able to focus and *get things done*. You may see both less stress and less turnover in your team, department, and/or organization. Of course, higher productivity, lower stress, and lower turnover positively affects the bottom-line profitability of your organization. It certainly seems to be a no-brainer. Make “no blinging” rule number one in your organization and your work team.

End of Chapter Review Questions:

- What is “blinging”?
- Why is blinging such a negative habit for sustained productivity and focus?
- How many IQ points do you lose when you are actively blinging?
- Why is e-mail considered an “open loop” form of communication? And why is it important to follow through on urgent and important e-mails that you send to others?
- What is the recommended advice to follow when dealing with a “blinging” boss?

Key Strategy Review:

Key Strategy #6: Don’t Bling! (Don’t Constantly Check Your E-mail Throughout the Day.)

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Following Chapter 6, I then go into a discussion on a better way to organize your “archival” e-mails – those e-mails that you have “completed” but would like to keep for future reference, and this entails moving them OUT of your inbox. I follow that with a very important set of chapters that discuss my recommended process for getting your e-mail account and inbox “clean” if you’ve got hundreds or even thousands of messages just sitting there taking up space. And I then give you a chapter of “strong encouragement” to keep your account clean once you go through the process to get it clean – much like working to keep off the extra pounds once you successfully complete a diet! We even talk briefly about effectively using your e-mail’s archive tool.

I also spend a chapter on a completely “counter-theory” on how to administer your e-mail account – a theory that says “file nothing” – and I lay out the pros and cons of this strategy (yes, there are some pros!) These chapters also discuss the effective use of the search and sort functions embedded within most e-mail programs – learning to use these functions can greatly increase your confidence when it comes to administering your e-mail account.

And then, the book takes a bit of a turn. You’ll notice that we haven’t discussed “carbon copy” or forwarded e-mails yet – now is the time. And that is the topic of your next preview chapter:

PART 3 – CARBON COPIES, FORWARDS, “CRISIS” E-MAILS, AND JUNK/SPAM STRATEGIES

Chapter 13 – Dealing with Excessive E-mail Carbon Copies, Forwards, and Replies

This may be one of the most practical chapters in the book, because it gets to the heart of where so many people are feeling major pain with their e-mail accounts and e-mail management. This pain comes from dealing with the massive number of messages many of us receive on a regular basis that are in the form of carbon copies, forwarded messages, and replies. What’s interesting about these types of e-mails is that many of them are generated simply due to bad habits of many e-mail senders. I believe that much of this can be explained by the fact that the vast majority of working professionals have never taken a formal training program on effective e-mail management, or that these same professionals have never even just stepped back and thought about their behaviors when it comes to replying to, CC’ing, and forwarding messages. A little bit of common sense can go a long way in terms of solving many of the problems with these types of e-mails. However, we have to take the time to think about what we are doing wrong if we want to make a positive change.

Let’s dive in and share some tangible ideas on how to get these types of e-mails under control. We’ll start with a new Key Strategy.

Key Strategy #11: End the FYI/“Just Thought You’d Want to Know” E-mails

The e-mail message I most dislike receiving is one that is multiple pages long and has been forwarded from one of my co-workers, clients, or vendors. The person who forwarded the message simply added either “FYI” or “Just thought you’d want to know” to the top of the body text of the message. Why does this message bother me so? For this simple reason: If you forward to me an e-mail that’s several pages long and just put “FYI” at the top, you haven’t told me what it is about this message that merits my attention. What information contained in the message is important for me to know? Is it the whole message, or just a part of it that is important?

The reason this e-mail irritates me so much is that I have to play “mind reader,” and figure out why you deemed the message important enough to forward. Now, I might guess correctly about your intentions, but then again, I might not, and that creates a risk of a miscommunication, an error of omission, and/or several other undesirable consequences. Another reason this type of message bothers me is that it wastes my time! If I’m not sure why the message was forwarded in the first place, I typically have to read the message several times to try to figure out why I received it, and also what I am supposed to do now that I have it. Unless the e-mail you forward is very short and self-explanatory, the “FYI” phrase and its close cousin, “Just thought you’d want to know,” are simply way too vague for proper defined action.

So, my strong recommendation is to simply stop sending those vague “FYI” and “Just thought you’d want to know” e-mails.

Let's talk about a different—and much smarter—way to send these e-mails. If you ever forward a message that is longer than a single paragraph (some experts would even say longer than a single sentence), you have to provide the recipient of the message more than simply “FYI” or “Just thought you’d want to know.” A better strategy: be quite a bit more specific and list the reasons why you decided to forward this message to the recipient. For example, a message like this is much more usable and specific:

Dear Ted,

I’M FORWARDING THIS MESSAGE TO YOU, BECAUSE, AS YOU’LL NOTE ON PAGE TWO OF THIS E-MAIL, PARAGRAPH TWO, LINE THREE, THERE IS A SPECIFIC DELIVERABLE THAT WE NEED TO PERFORM FOR OUR CLIENT. CAN YOU PLEASE CONFIRM THAT YOU WILL COMPLETE THIS DELIVERABLE BY THIS DATE?

Thanks! --Randy [message follows]

This gives the recipient a lot more information about exactly what needs to be done, and is obviously much better than the vague “FYI” or “Just thought you’d want to know.” Sending this kind of message does require a bit more time up front, as the sender must very clearly state what needs to be done, but it saves a large amount of time (and grief!) on the part of the recipient. This is because such a message makes it very easy for the recipient to decipher and determine why that e-mail was forwarded in the first place. Also, by pointing out a specific deliverable and/or due date, the message empowers the recipient to take defined action. This leads to another key strategy.

Key Strategy #12: Consider Only Forwarding or CC’ing Messages in Which All Recipients Have a Defined Task or Action to Complete

As I mentioned earlier, we live in an age of e-mail overload. If we didn’t, you probably wouldn’t be reading this book right now. A good part of that e-mail overload is made up of forwarded messages and CCs that are either questionable in value or downright unnecessary. A good general rule to help reduce this flow of unnecessary e-mail is to send messages only to people who will have a defined task or action to complete due to the receipt of the e-mail. There’s a corollary to this: *Why did you even need to receive the e-mail if you don’t have an action to take because of it?* Now, I will be the first to admit that this may not be a perfect rule, and that sometimes there is a benefit in simply sharing information via a forwarded or CC’d e-mail. But I also believe that far too many professionals very casually forward far too many e-mails of questionable informational value simply out of personal convenience, and thus clog up far too many of their colleagues’ e-mail inboxes with unnecessary clutter. Do you agree? Can you help fix this problem? Follow this general rule—that every message you forward must contain a deliverable—and a big part of the problem with too many forwards and CCs will go away, especially if you can get your broader team (your co-workers, clients, vendors, and so on) to also follow this same rule.

By the way, if you follow this logic to a T, department-wide forwards and CCs—a major problem in many organizations—should greatly become a thing of the past. This is because every single recipient of the message would need a defined deliverable, and when you send or forward a message to ten or more people, it is not only unlikely that every person will have a defined action, but it may be—from a practical perspective—logistically impossible. Getting your team to adopt this general rule may stop the one or two people in the department who like to copy everybody on everything—which is one of the most common complaints I receive when I lead my “Taming E-mail” seminars.

Now, related to this, here’s another sanity strategy that builds right out of the preceding discussion.

Key Strategy #13: Consider Deleting Unnecessary Historical Text When Forwarding or Replying to Messages

If you are about to forward an e-mail that is seven pages long, but the specific deliverable for the recipient is on page two, and all of the information to put the deliverable in proper context is given in pages one through three, is it possible for you to delete the remaining e-mail text from pages four through seven? You might, of course, need to keep some of the message text to keep the message in proper context and give enough information so the recipient can accomplish the defined deliverable appropriately. But, if much of the material after page three is extraneous and unnecessary, why not just delete that text, so the recipient can save some time and also be more focused in terms of what he or she needs to complete? This seems like a pretty straightforward and commonsense strategy that could really save people a lot of time, but it is one that I rarely see people use.

Here’s another reason this strategy can be quite helpful: If you delete the unnecessary historical text, you reduce the possibility that “for your eyes only” information (information specifically sent for one—and *only* one—person) will be accidentally forwarded to the wrong person. Have you ever received a forwarded message in which you found a piece of information that maybe you shouldn’t have seen? Possibly something that should have remained in confidence between the original senders? I’ve heard of several examples of this happening—and have even seen one or two of these situations personally—and it almost always has a negative result within or between organizations.

It is obviously very easy in most e-mail programs for people to forward messages or hit “Reply to All.” You need to remember this risk whenever you send or forward a message, and mitigate the “accidental forwarding” risk whenever possible by deleting historical text.

A final good reason to delete unnecessary historical text is that very often, that text comes in the form of a string of messages. Often, those messages contain the names and e-mail addresses of past message recipients. If you delete that text, you reduce the risk that those names and/or e-mail addresses will get “pirated” by a junk e-mailer or spammer, and you create a more secure e-mail environment. These people—junk e-mailers and spammers—often are on the lookout for valid e-mail addresses to add to their lists. Deleting the historical text—especially when in the form of “message strings”—helps to protect other e-mailers from receiving more junk and spam.

If we all start deleting unnecessary text, we'll receive the benefit of reduced message load and greater message clarity, which will save all of us a good amount of time and grief.

Key Strategy #14: Change the Subject Line Text When the Subject Changes

Very often people will, in essence, have a conversation via e-mail, meaning that somebody will send an e-mail, and that e-mail will set off a series of replies back and forth between the individuals, which I like to call an e-mail loop. If you are in the midst of one of these e-mail communication loops, and you decide to change the subject of the message (that is, the e-mail is about one topic—one project, one subject, one task—and then, just out of convenience, you hit “Reply” to ask the other party in the loop something on another topic), *please* go up to the top of the e-mail and change the subject line to indicate that you've changed the topic.

You can do this by simply overwriting the subject line. Get rid of all of the “RE: RE: RE: FW:s,” and instead, overwrite the existing subject text with the name of the new subject/topic. Because the topic has changed, another smart strategy is to delete all of the previous text from the previous e-mails and previous conversation, for all of the very good reasons mentioned earlier. If you can get yourself into this habit on a regular and consistent basis, you'll greatly reduce the amount of extraneous information (and e-mail addresses) being shared.

Key Strategy #15: Stop the Insanity of Unproductive E-mail Loops

I have witnessed several times in my career what I consider insane e-mail loops. These are e-mail loops that really start to jump back and forth between two or more senders, for a fairly simple and plainly evident reason: someone is having some sort of miscommunication or misunderstanding, and thus the messaging parties keep going back and forth for further clarification. If you ever sense that you've been pulled into one of these insane e-mail loops, you have to consider whether e-mail is even the most efficient and/or effective manner of communication. Very often, a smarter thing to do would be to simply cut off that e-mail loop, pick up the phone, and/or get up from your desk and go find the person. If you can do that—if you can cut off the miscommunication / misunderstanding by having a face-to-face or at least an ear-to-ear conversation—you should be able to save a lot of time and grief for all parties involved. It certainly seems that following this strategy would be a much more effective and efficient use of your time and energy than is trading e-mails back and forth all day long and accomplishing nothing. Investing five minutes in a real conversation—which by the way is always an option (and is something that many professionals seem to have forgotten!)—may save you half an hour or more of aggravating time sending e-mails back and forth.

Now let's take a moment to take a bigger-picture look at these e-mail loops, in which you almost treat your e-mail like instant messaging. Do you remember our earlier discussion about not being a blinger? When you actively participate in these e-mail communication loops, you greatly increase the likelihood that you are going to participate in that bad blinging behavior. And every time you do bling, you create an unneeded interruption for yourself, which, as we discussed earlier, may cause you as much as four to fifteen minutes of lost productivity every time. E-mail

loops are close cousins to blinging and usually lead to inefficient behavior that is very damaging to effective productivity.

Try to follow a general and simple rule like this: If you want to keep your productivity up, and you sense that you're getting pulled into one of these e-mail communication loops, do yourself a favor and stop the loop. Pick up the phone and call the person, or get up from your desk, go find the person, and have an actual conversation. Another option is this: simply send the person a message asking if you can get together for a five- or ten-minute formally scheduled meeting sometime later that day. Use this meeting time to have an efficient conversation, and to knock out all of the issues that you're currently in discussion about. This certainly makes a lot more sense to me than utilizing your e-mail for instant messaging.

I hope you've enjoyed these strategies on how to gain more sanity with your CCs, forwards, and e-mail communication loops. In the next two chapters, we'll have a deeper discussion about two very specific kinds of forwarded e-mails that can cause major problems for professionals and the companies they work for: CC as a CYA, and an e-mail message I like to call the e-mail "firebomb."

End of Chapter Review Questions:

- What is the problem with lengthy "FYI/Just thought you'd want to know?" e-mails?
- What is a simple solution to help end the overuse of CC'd and forwarded e-mails?
- What are two compelling reasons to delete the unnecessary "historical text" from forwarded messages?
- What is an "unproductive e-mail loop"? What is a simple solution for ending this "e-mail loop?"

Key Strategy Review:

Key Strategy #11: End the FYI/"Just Thought You'd Want to Know" E-mails

Key Strategy #12: Consider Only Forwarding or CC'ing Messages in Which All Recipients Have a Defined Task or Action to Complete

Key Strategy #13: Consider Deleting Unnecessary Historical Text When Forwarding or Replying to Messages

Key Strategy #14: Change the Subject Line Text When the Subject Changes

Key Strategy #15: Stop the Insanity of Unproductive E-mail Loops

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Coming next, I will discuss specific strategies for dealing with those that use “CC as a CYA”, as well as a better way to handle e-mails that you receive that are laden with urgency or crisis. I’ll even discuss situations when it doesn’t make sense to use e-mail – when a live conversation makes much more sense. Of course, I’ll cover some strategies on better managing junk and SPAM e-mails, as well as strategies on how to be a “better e-mailer” when using PDAs and/or “smart phones”. Finally, I’ll discuss some other tools we haven’t discussed yet, including tools for making e-mail much more efficient and effective when using it to send messages to large groups of people, or even to use e-mail from more of a marketing/promotional perspective.

This is a lot of information – a lot of GOOD information – that can help not only you, but those around you, to use their e-mail better, be more efficient, gain productivity, and get your e-mail beast *under control*. These strategies work – adopting a few will likely find you extra time every day and week either for more productivity, or just to give back to yourself. And if you adopt the majority of these strategies, a whole new realm of possibility will open for you. So, I encourage you to read on to learn more about this book and how to order ...

READ BELOW FOR A SPECIAL OFFER ON HOW TO GET THE REMAINING 17 CHAPTERS OF *TAMING THE E-MAIL BEAST* RIGHT AWAY.

Hi, Randy Dean, the “Totally Obsessed” Time Management Guy and E-mail Sanity Expert, here again.

*I hope you enjoyed this little sampling of **Taming the E-mail Beast: 45 Key Strategies for Better Managing Your E-mail Overload (and Regaining Your E-mail Sanity).***

I also hope that this info has enticed you to learn even more.

A few questions for you:

- *Does it feel like e-mail is taking over your life?*
- *Has e-mail become a dreaded part of your day?*
- *Do you have so many e-mails in your inbox right now you don't know where to start?*
- *Or, are you getting so many new e-mails every day, you are struggling to keep up?*
- *Does e-mail leave you feeling “scatterbrained” on a regular, daily basis?*
- *And is it getting in the way of getting done the things you really need to get done?*
- *Do you feel like e-mail is hindering your professional and or personal life and productivity?*



If you answered “Yes” to any (or all) of the questions above, I can help.

You are right now in a “fight” with your “e-mail beast”. Which one of you is going to win: you, or your beast? I believe I can help you to tame that e-mail beast. If you can't get control of your e-mail, it is hard to feel “in control” of just about anything else in your life.

If you can follow intelligent, sane, “common-sense” strategies, you can get your e-mail under control, and turn your e-mail back into that proactive “power tool” for enhanced productivity, rather than the thing that keeps you from enjoying your work (and life) and from performing as you know you can.

Most of the working professionals I know have never taken a formal course in effective e-mail management. And even fewer have taken the time to think about how e-mail should fit into their work and life appropriately and intelligently – almost no one has taken a “big picture” view on this ubiquitous, ever present productivity tool.

But I have.

I have developed unique but very sensible philosophies and strategies for effective e-mail management. These strategies have become the basis for very popular corporate and conference training and speaking sessions that I have delivered all across the U.S. and even abroad. They

have helped struggling managers make sense of and regain control of their e-mail account. I have helped managers with literally thousands of e-mails get their accounts back to nearly ZERO in less than a week's time. And I have helped those same busy professionals keep their e-mail under control moving forward, with intelligent strategies on not only how to handle new e-mails, but also how to take care of the e-mails they already have.

And I have compiled all of this information – including several new strategies that I have never shared in my popular seminar and training programs – into this new book.

*And now you can have this new book – a book containing **45 key strategies** for better e-mail management. And you can have this new book right now – in E-book format – before it even hits the shelves: <http://www.randalldean.com/offers.html>*

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I can't wait to hear from you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy F. Dean". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Randy Dean

The E-mail Sanity Expert, and "Totally Obsessed" Time Management Guy

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