



TRY THESE TOOLS

- Airmail
- Asana
- Evernote
- Google's Inbox
- Google Boomerang
- Polymail
- Unroll.me

Mail Client

Message

+ New Reply Forward Add Star Delete Print Back to Inbox From

Making Email Work for You

T By Theresa Stager
Monday, January 23, 2017 at 10:35 AM

Shorten your workweek with email management tips.

Nothing ruins a principal's day like spending an hour answering emails, hitting "refresh," and finding another 20 waiting. What about digging through your inbox to find something you're not quite sure you've dealt with? I'll bet if you asked any school administrator what would make the job a little easier, he or she would say "more time" and "less email." I can't help with less email, but here are some tips that may help you gain some time. Over the past 13 years I've worked as a K-5 music educator and a 9-12 choir co-director, an elementary principal, and an implementation director for a payroll firm. I decided early on that email would not run my life, and I've learned a few tips and tricks along the way.

Don't use your inbox as your task list. There are task managers for that. Keeping emails in your "starred" list or your inbox so you know to complete them will clutter your inbox and guarantee that you miss something. Systems like Asana and Evernote allow you to forward your emails to the program. Each email becomes a separate task (attachments and all), allowing you to go back and complete it when you're ready. Double bonus: your inbox stays a little closer to zero.

Find an email program that snoozes. Airmail, Google's Inbox, and my current favorite, Polymail, are among the best I've tried (and believe me, I've tried most!). The best thing about snoozing an email is that it leaves your inbox and lives in a "snoozed" folder. When time comes for the snoozed email to return, it enters your inbox as a new email, notification and all. Snooze features are usually customizable and have options ranging from "later today" to "next week" and beyond. If you plan to look for a new email program, a snooze feature is a must.

Search



Compose

Turn off notifications. Nothing kills productivity like email notifications in the middle of ... well, anything. Gloria Mark of the University of California, Irvine, found that a typical office worker gets only 11 minutes between interruptions, with an average of 25 minutes to return to the original task after an interruption. Set times every day to check your email, and be sure to turn off those notifications.

Send it later. Google's Inbox and Polymail are two options that boast a "boomerang" or "send later" feature. These options allow you to reply to all of your emails, send new ones, and clear out your inbox at any time of day or night, but emails won't arrive in recipients' inboxes until the time you choose. If you wonder why this is a productivity saver, think of the last time you sent an email just before bedtime that turned into a conversation, or a staff member worried that you expected a reply to an email sent at 10:30 p.m.

Unsubscribe. If you want to clear out your inbox, I recommend signing up for Unroll.me immediately. Within a few minutes, Unroll.me scans your entire inbox, letting you know how many emails you have from subscription services. You then can go through each individually (you have to do this only once) and either keep emails showing up as they arrive, one-click unsubscribe from them, or add them to your "roll." The roll arrives once daily in your inbox, with all emails in the roll in a user-friendly interface. You can open each individually, but they all come as one email at your choice of time each day. Even better, if you have a new subscription, Unroll.me will indicate it at the top of your daily roll and you have the quick option to choose where each of these new subscriptions goes. Unroll.me has been the biggest timesaver and easiest way to unsubscribe I have seen. Plus, it's free.

Naturally, not all these tips may work for you. Don't start a brand-new system overnight, but take one or two tips and start there. I suggest first shutting off your notifications and signing up for Unroll.me. These two actions alone will organize your inbox and keep you on task. I would love to get feedback about how any of these systems has worked for you or about useful alternatives. Feel free to contact me on Twitter using @PrincipalStager.

Theresa Stager is assistant principal at Saline High School in Saline, Michigan, and is a co-host of the PrincipalPLN podcast.