

# Managing E-mail as a

# Revenue-generating Tool

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Do you have a plan of attack for the electronic correspondence that fills your inbox?

As your business e-mail volume increases, you will find that having an efficient management system for e-mail correspondence becomes necessary. After all, as an entrepreneur, your e-mail messages represent new business, continuing business or an increased level of business. These messages are an important link in both revenue generation and top-line growth. For this reason, the creation and utilization of a time efficient e-mail strategy that meets all the informational needs of you and your recipient, is critical.

## Make the Best Use of Your E-mail Activities by Planning Ahead

Decide, at the beginning of your day, which e-mail messages you are expecting and need to return immediately, which you will answer later in the day or evening and which you will leave to answer another day. By using this method, the incoming messages serve as a way to monitor your progress throughout the day. The process of checking your messages then becomes a reassurance that you are in receipt of the information you expect and need.

## Handle the Unexpected E-mail Message by Knowing Your Priorities

Align your priorities with both your short-term and long-term goals. Overlay them on top of your immediate deadlines and consider the schedule of your sender. The process of overlaying identifies the areas that you have in common with the sender and allows you to make the best decision on how to meet not only your sender's informational needs but yours as well. Once those variables are known you can easily decide when and how to handle each unexpected e-mail communication.

## How to Qualify Individual E-mail Messages and Maximize your Time

Oftentimes, your e-mail responses to similar requests may have different results; e.g., one recipient may be satisfied while another replies with a host of other questions. To make the best use of your time, consider the knowledge level of the sender, the informational needs of the sender and your knowledge of your product and service. Doing this helps you to anticipate those needs **before** you answer any e-mail message.



### Some key questions to consider:

1. Qualify each sender: Is he or she the decision-maker for the service or product you are marketing? Do you need to reply to them with the answer, or should you ask to include someone else in your e-mail message?
2. What informational needs do your clients have? Are you ready to satisfy all of them? Do you need to get back to them with additional information? If so, how will you remind yourself to do so?
3. Is a reply e-mail communication the best way to answer, or should you pick up the phone? Does the recipient favor written or oral communications? Do you need any points clarified?

## E-mail Tips for Efficient Communications

*Most business people receive more e-mail messages than they can sort through in a day. Therefore, make your requests clear and guarantee quick responses to your messages with these simple tips:*

1. Make it easy for the recipient to contact you: Include an e-mail signature with your phone number and Web site address in every e-mail communication.
2. If you plan to use the cc (carbon copy) feature to send a message to additional individuals, ask yourself if they will understand why they are recipients. Would it be better to forward the message with a personal note of explanation?
3. If you will be out of your office for an extended period, make sure to notify your clients ahead of time and ask if they need anything prior to your departure. It is a good idea to also set an "Out of the Office" message to keep your clients informed.
4. Consider the action (i.e., response) you want as a result of your e-mail communication. Help ensure that response by changing the subject line and last sentence in the body of your message to reflect your expectations: Use phrases such as "Review and comment," "Call me," "Block out meeting time," etc., to give a clear message about what you need.



## To increase your ability to create and to respond to an increased volume of e-mail messages, consider taking the following steps:

1. Develop templates that cover the most common reasons you send e-mail communications: information requests, announcements of sales, specials, product and service explanations, prospecting letters, letters of introduction, etc.
2. Make sure to create electronic files to store any e-mail messages you might need to refer to at a later date (e.g., terms of delivery on a contract). Delete those that are extraneous (e.g., meeting time discussions) or expired in value (e.g., coupons).
3. Utilize the many management tools that e-mail programs offer. Consider the time you will have to spend learning about the programs as a time-saving investment. Once you learn the functions, they will help you make effective and efficient deliveries on your clients' and prospects' expectations.

By implementing any of the above tips, you will maximize your time by formulating an e-mail plan that ensures that you answer each e-mail message in a way that meets the recipient's informational needs. You will also minimize unnecessary follow-ups (because you have already anticipated their informational needs) and you will be able to easily refer back

to messages as needed. As an entrepreneur your time is a valuable asset. Therefore, make sure that the time you spend on your e-mail communications enhances your potential to generate revenue from new prospects and to maintain current clients who are satisfied with your service.



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