

Email addiction must end

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Doing a few emails in the morning and night on a holiday is not a break, it's just taking a long lunch: Simon Sinek.

This year my out-of-office email reply will say, "in case of an emergency, deal with it yourself".

Not because I don't care, quite the opposite. I value my break time to truly recharge and because we have become way too available.

You can contact me on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and three email addresses. Oh, and also call or text my mobile. I'm tired just going through the list. We need to normalise shutting down the constant messages and emails to properly rest. It can't just be a quick-fix remedy when you are feeling burnt out.

I have a love-hate relationship with my emails. According to a McKinsey analysis, the average professional spends 28 per cent of the workday reading and replying to pesky emails. For a full-time worker, that's an average of 120 emails per day taking up a massive 2.6 hours. Yuck.

These stats show email as a form of "knowledge pollution" which is choking communication everywhere.

When did we devise this invisible contract that says when you send an email to someone, it immediately makes them obliged to reply?

Email is such a selfish tool. These little legal documents constantly ping are killing productivity, so addictive and distracting. Just because someone sends us a message, doesn't mean we automatically have to give them a reply. This obligation needs to stop.

Many of us wake up, roll over and check emails the moment one eye opens. A willing slave to the inbox.

At sunrise, an overflowing inbox greets me and my cornflakes. Dealing with email



Illustration: Don Lindsay

The root problem is the volume of emails we send and receive.

stress is key to working efficiently and integral to effective leadership communication.

Some days I nail this, some days emails leave me almost drowning with my nose just above water. As we gasp for air, we need to have a conversation about when and how we email.

"Email addiction" is very real, with some people checking their inboxes 30 or 40 times an hour (wow) without even being aware of it.

Once we see an email notification pop up, it takes 60 seconds for our brains to

refocus on what we were doing. I compare it to a steam train coming to a fast halt and then having to very slowly start gaining speed again—clearly slowing productivity and "flow".

Over-checking email wastes 21 minutes a day. On average, professionals check their email 15 times a day, or every 37 minutes. The collective delusion that in order to succeed we must send a thousand emails a day and work ourselves into the ground is so passe.

While waiting for a meeting to start, it's now sadly a common sight to see everyone look down at their phones silently and mindlessly scrolling through emails. Conversation dissipated, sucked up by the digital devil. Then it gets worse — email still remains an attention-grabber during the get-together with

people's eyes darting to their email notifications. Not only do I think it's rude but I also think it is a sign they value their time more than yours.

The world witnessed this play out on the G20 global stage as ol' mate Trump spent the whole summit looking down at his phone. I mean why focus on the world's dire economy when you can check emails or Twitter, right? This is all too common, but far from OK.

Policies surrounding email protocols have come into the corporate crosshairs.

Multibillion-dollar international IT company Atos is the official IT integrator for the Olympic games and they are working to reverse the email trend and striving to be a zero-email company.

Many other corporate giants have followed, swinging the pendulum and adopting different drastic email

philosophies to increase workplace profitability, efficiencies and staff wellbeing.

In France they even went as far as making a law to ban work emails after hours.

However, the root problem is the volume of emails we send and receive. It is unsustainable for many businesses. Respite from the daily avalanche of emails is so important and employees who prioritise self-care almost always boost the bottom line. Rest is a form of productivity and something worthy of your time.

We need to cure email addiction. That dopamine hit is not good for you. And for goodness sake, give yourself permission to take a break.

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What to do when you overstep the mark at the office party

GARY MARTIN

It's time for the end-of-year workplace get-together — the day outing or night function to celebrate a year's hard work with colleagues and boost spirits ahead of the festive season.

And even in this COVID year, the office bash will end up closing the door on some promising careers when a mixture of alcohol, festive cheer and a group of people whom you see every day collide to cause things to go awry.

Let's face it, we have all seen any number of things go wrong at past office get-togethers — over-the-top dance moves, secret Santa gifts of poor taste, alcohol-induced tearful

declarations in the bathroom and inappropriate flirting.

Maybe you have seen a colleague tell another what they really thought of them or a workmate share with the boss the error of their ways.

Perhaps you have witnessed a colleague gather enough Dutch courage to tell another about their enormous crush — on them.

Or it might simply have been that you were a bystander to obnoxious behaviour that is completely unsuited to the work environment.

And the problem is that what happens at the office party rarely stays at the office party, with the contents of many a get-together spilling into chatter around the office water cooler the very next day.

But if you end up being one of those people who this year ends up humiliating themselves, don't panic.

It all comes down to the steps you take at the first available opportunity to move into damage control fast.

With that in mind, you do need to go to work the next day — no, you cannot call in sick to buy time to think through your actions.

Any absence will simply draw even greater attention to your antics from the day or night before.

One of the worst things that can happen is to act like nothing happened.

Test out your recollection of events with a trusted colleague to help gauge the gravity of your gaffe.

Start apologies by approaching anyone who may have been upset, offended, felt uncomfortable or was alarmed by anything you said or did.

Those apologies need to be delivered in a sincere and remorseful manner without any unnecessary "excuse making" — which will detract from the genuineness of your gesture.

And if you believe your actions attracted the attention of your boss, make the time to reassure your manager your behaviour was completely out of character and will not be repeated — it may end up being the key action that salvages your reputation and even your career.

Nearly everyone has had embarrassing moments at work

and the reality is it is not always possible to fully recover.

Serious misconduct cannot be undone and will often end in termination of employment.

But where recovery is possible, the key to putting an incident behind you lies in how you handle your missteps and bounce back.

The faster you can recover, the less memorable the incident will be for all.

And until the incident is a distant memory in the minds of your colleagues, keep focused on your work and re-create the impression you are — in fact — the perfect co-worker.

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