



Break Your E-Mail Addiction

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The higher up in the organization you go, the more people want from you. One and all are in immediate need of your time, energy, approval, decisiveness and so much more.

It's too common for my clients to claim: "I came in at 7:00 a.m., left at 6:00 p.m. and didn't accomplish one thing today."

The continual onslaught of meetings is one culprit. Yet spending 2.5 hours reading and responding to e-mails is the other. What would you do with those extra hours each day?

The average business person sifts through 143 e-mails per day, with only 12 requiring immediate action. 80% are deleted within 3.2 seconds. The more often you check your e-mail, the more time is wasted.

Many of us cannot function without checking e-mail persistently, irrespective of being in meetings or conversations with individuals two feet away. The impression this leaves on others is that your latest LinkedIn notice or Amazon offering is more important than they are.

This Holiday Season, give others the gift of your full attention and yourself the gift of time by following my **Top 7 Tips** for stepping away from your addiction to e-mail.

1. **Focus on the essential and important.** Eliminate anything that does not require your action or attention, including internal or external e-mail blasts; unnecessary carbon copies; funny forwards from friends; Living Social shopping deals; and Facebook alerts. Set time away from the office to keep up on the social media of your choice.
2. **Check e-mail only three times a day.** Discipline yourself to check your e-mail mid morning, after lunch and at the end of each day. If someone really needs you, they can pick up the phone. This allows you to tackle what's truly important to you throughout the day rather than being at the beckoning call of others' needs.
3. **Keep it short.** Train those with whom you communicate to keep their e-mails short. If either their initial e-mail or your response takes more than a paragraph for informational purposes or few short lines requesting action, pick up the phone. Master the art of bullet points and short sentences.
4. **Choose one topic per e-mail.** Place your one topic in the subject line, along with your purpose. For example: "2:00 Meeting, Please Confirm." If it's a string of back and forth e-mails where the topic has changed, then change the Subject Line.
5. **Don't respond too quickly.** If you respond within seconds of receiving each e-mail, you are setting precedence. People will always expect an immediate response and wonder what's wrong if they don't get it. Additionally, they will expect you to solve their problems. Allow time for them to come up with their own solutions.

6. **Never respond when you are upset.** E-mail is not intended to communicate emotion, though it is often read with emotion. If you are disappointed or upset, take time to first think through your response and then respond by phone or in person.
7. **Clear out e-mail at the end of each day.** Your day is almost done; you're tired and thinking of family and a hot dinner. Why would you spend more time in the office with dreaded e-mail? Don't wait until you're ready to walk out the door. Schedule a 30-minute timeframe at the end of each day to complete your day. This includes closing the loop on any e-mails and setting your top priorities for the next day. It's a win/win for you.

Bonus tip: Add your phone number in your signature line. I am surprised at how few people have the courtesy to list their contact information. A phone call can often save time and quickly clarify issues that get blurred in e-mail.

To most highly-successful individuals, e-mail is a necessary nuisance. Don't *you* be the nuisance with too frequent or too long e-mails - or spending too much time rudely checking e-mail in the presence of others.

I challenge you to enhance at least one aspect of your e-mail communication beginning today. Those with whom you communicate will welcome your communication and you'll enjoy your new found freedom of time.

Read all of Ann's Writing and Wisdom at: <http://gvasuccess.com/writing-and-wisdom.htm>

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