

## Proven steps to conquer your inbox

A low stress workplace doesn't just happen but it is totally possible to create one if you follow some simple guidelines.

### The email problem

When emails are not managed in an effective way, tasks can fall through the cracks which can really impact performance and customer service. And day to day, interruptions due to emails impact on our focus which has been proven to dramatically reduce productivity.

While recommendations to turn off notifications and allocate time for addressing emails are very helpful, these solutions only go so far to solving the email problem...

**Reducing email traffic** might seem impossible but it's not, and it's a surefire way to reduce stress and free up time for more productive time AND leads to a less stressed, happier workforce.

### What does the research say?

Recent research has shown that there are some surprisingly simple ways to reduce email traffic.

A collaboration of researchers from the University of Glasgow and Modeuro Consulting studied what happened when employees at utilities company London Power were asked simply to think twice before sending an email.

The result? Internal emails were halved and 11,000 hours of time were saved!

## The Key Principle

*"If there's too much traffic on the road and you'd like to reduce it by 15%, you only have to get 1% fewer people to drive.*

*So just a small turn in behaviour has a massive avalanche effect and I think just the fact that the executives had undertaken to send fewer emails somehow that just had an avalanche effect."*

**Karen Renaud** has been researching email behaviour for more than 10 years.

### Three key recommendations:

- **Break the pattern** - When you receive an email, take a moment to assess whether you need to respond, and who you need to respond to. Only respond to whom, if and when necessary.
- **Slow down** - The researchers found that the faster you respond to an email, the more likely people will email you. While it seems efficient, waiting between 4 and 12 hours to respond reduces traffic.
- **Be outcome focused** – While it may appear to be efficient to pop something in an email and be done with it, in fact it usually leads to a chain of emails and often a conversation is more productive. Emails are much more useful for providing information than for conversations. Pick up the phone or better still go and see someone in the same office. If you need a record of the conversation, email a summary afterwards.

To be able to effectively encourage staff to make these changes, an **AWARENESS** of their own behaviour must be cultivated.

The simple act of observing one's own emailing behaviour and being more mindful of patterns around responding, timing, recipients and desired outcomes can facilitate a significant reduction in email traffic.

It clearly follows that a workplace culture that espouses mindfulness more broadly, and where managers are committed to policies and practices that are best for their people as well as for business will be able to follow such recommendations with ease.

*“Only send to people who have to see the message and act on it... If you keep blasting stuff into people’s inboxes, they will just ignore you—like the boy who cried wolf.”*