

Master Your Inbox



Author: Fiona Newton



About Fiona Newton....

Bachelor of Arts, Media

Certified Microsoft Specialist

Certificate 4 in Workplace Training & Assessment

Fiona has 20 years' experience in helping staff at all levels of an organisation be more effective and productive in their roles – whether it be managing time, developing emotional intelligence or giving effective presentations! She has a unique approach to managing time, managing email and using technology to be more effective. Fiona is not only gifted at demystifying technology and explaining how to use it in plain English, she is also able to develop the practical processes needed to use technology in our work lives effectively.

Renowned for being an inspiring speaker, trainer and broadcaster, Fiona shares her personal insights and experience to help others, whether it's with practical advice or shared wisdom. With every presentation and training session, Fiona aims to ensure her audience takes away useful insights, inspiration and tips that will help them succeed in their career or business. When she is not busy running a successful training organisation, she also manages the Fitzroy Market and is a broadcaster on the award winning radio show and podcast, Chicks Talking Footy.

Her clients include:

Russell Kennedy Lawyers, Lander & Rogers, Maurice Blackburn, Griffith University, Melbourne University, State Emergency Service, Maribyrnong Council, La Trobe Council, Frankston Council, City of Wodonga, University of Wollongong, UniSuper, Hall Payne Lawyers, Queensland University of Technology, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries and more



Email - Friend or Foe?

Tim Ferris (author of The 4 Hour Work Week) said that email is the biggest time waster in modern life!

Emails drop into our expanding inboxes at an alarming rate, just as we reply to one email three more will come in! Which do we action? Which do we reply to? Where do we file them? Let alone getting the time to reply to each of the emails with the attention they deserve.

Email promised to help us be more productive, to communicate better, send information quicker and connect with more people and it has! BUT it also has a downside. The very thing that was meant for our good has become a huge burden for most people.

Emails come in to our Inbox unwanted and unnegotiated at a rapid rate every day!

It's a constant battle!

Knowing all this, we need to identify the traps we fall into with email and how to overcome them. We need to become the master of our inbox not the slave.

There are 5 key areas that we will focus on in this book to help you to master you inbox once and for all:

- 1 | Reduce the quantity of email that you deal with on a daily basis.**
- 2 | Reduce the interruptions that emails cause.**
- 3 | Improve the quality of emails that we send out.**
- 4 | Increase our ability to process emails more efficiently.**

What are Organisations doing to set

Atos - No more emails



Atos is an international information technology services company with 74,000 employees in 48 countries. Atos are moving towards a workplace with no email. Instead they are focusing on new social networking tools to collaborate - Blogs, Wikis, instant messages and social media. The CEO believes that email is resulting in productivity loss and clogging up people's systems. Previously, employees were receiving approximately 100 emails per day.

PBD Worldwide - No email Fridays



PBD World Wide, a Shipping Company in Atlanta have implemented a 'No Email Fridays' policy. CEO Scott Dokter was fed up after consistently receiving 200 emails a day and sending emails to his PA that sat 20 feet from him every day. Employees have been encouraged to meet face to face or phone to discuss work. So far it's been a hit! Employees are exercising more by getting up from their desk to speak to each other therefore communicating more effectively.



The French - No email after 6pm

A new labour agreement in France means that employees are under no obligation to check email via computer or Smartphones after 6pm and employers cannot put any pressure on to do so. This is to ensure full minimum rest periods as already mandated in French Employment Regulations. Oh la la!

Email Statistics

According to research by Basex:

Employees get interrupted 11 times per hour by email, IM and phone calls

Email takes up 2.1 hours of an employees work day

28% of employees take up to 5 minutes to recover and return to a task

In one hour of uninterrupted work an employee will achieve the same results as when working 3-4 hours with interruptions

Other research shows:

The average Australian business user receives 48 emails per day

60% of business users say they feel overwhelmed by the number of emails they receive each day



The Challenge with Email



Email Challenge #1 - Too many emails!!

Email is familiar, it's comfortable, it's easy to use! But it might just be the biggest time-killer in the office environment today (close rival being disorganised and unnecessary meetings). Our Inboxes have become an open door for just about anything, much of which is neither time sensitive or relevant.

Because it is convenient and efficient we send emails about everything. We send emails when there is an urgent matter, to the person sitting next to us, to discuss an important issue, to keep EVERYONE up to date, to share information. Emails go back and forth and around the office clogging up all of our Inboxes. It's not uncommon for professional people to receive between 30 and 100 emails per day. Some managers are receiving up to 200! Important messages are being lost in amongst spam, forward and cc'd messages.



Email Challenge #2 - Managing your day

There are two big traps that people fall into that cost hours in productivity!

1 | We manage our day from our Inbox

Your Inbox is just a mail box - a place to receive mail, it is NOT a To Do List or a filing cabinet!

Think about your mail box at home. You or someone in your household will check your mail box every day. You will then take the mail inside and it will be opened by the appropriate person, bills might go on the fridge, junk mail in the bin. I'm sure what you don't do is, check your mail and put a red flag on a bill because you know you won't be paying it straight away and put it back in to the mail box (actioning). Or receive some documents that you need to read and put a red flag on it and put it back in to the mailbox.

If you did that your mailbox would soon overflow and become unmanageable and your neighbours will think you're crazy!

Strangely, when we have converted the mailbox into the electronic world (our Inbox), this is exactly how we are managing ourselves. It's no wonder that we feel like we are drowning in email!

A better way to manage everything is from a central To Do List recorded in ONE place.



Email Challenge #3 - Too many tools

2 | We have too many places that we plan, manage and track our day from!

Writing a to do list, having a plan for your day and week are essential to being organised and productive!

The problem is now we have so much technology that we can use to manage our time - emails, smartphone apps, online tools, online calendars and task lists, spreadsheets, social networking and other tools we can use to manage our time like notebooks, sticky notes, paper diaries, whiteboards, desk planners, wall planners, scrap paper and so on! They are all places where we can be recording things we need to do or action.

When this is the case, there is no way to gain a sense of CONTROL over the events in our day or get a clear picture of what is happening and PRIORITISE your workload.



Email Challenge #4 - Interruptions

Most email clients give you a notification when an email arrives. When we see that notification we are often tempted to stop working on whatever tasks we are doing (no matter how important) and jump into our inbox. we become enslaved!

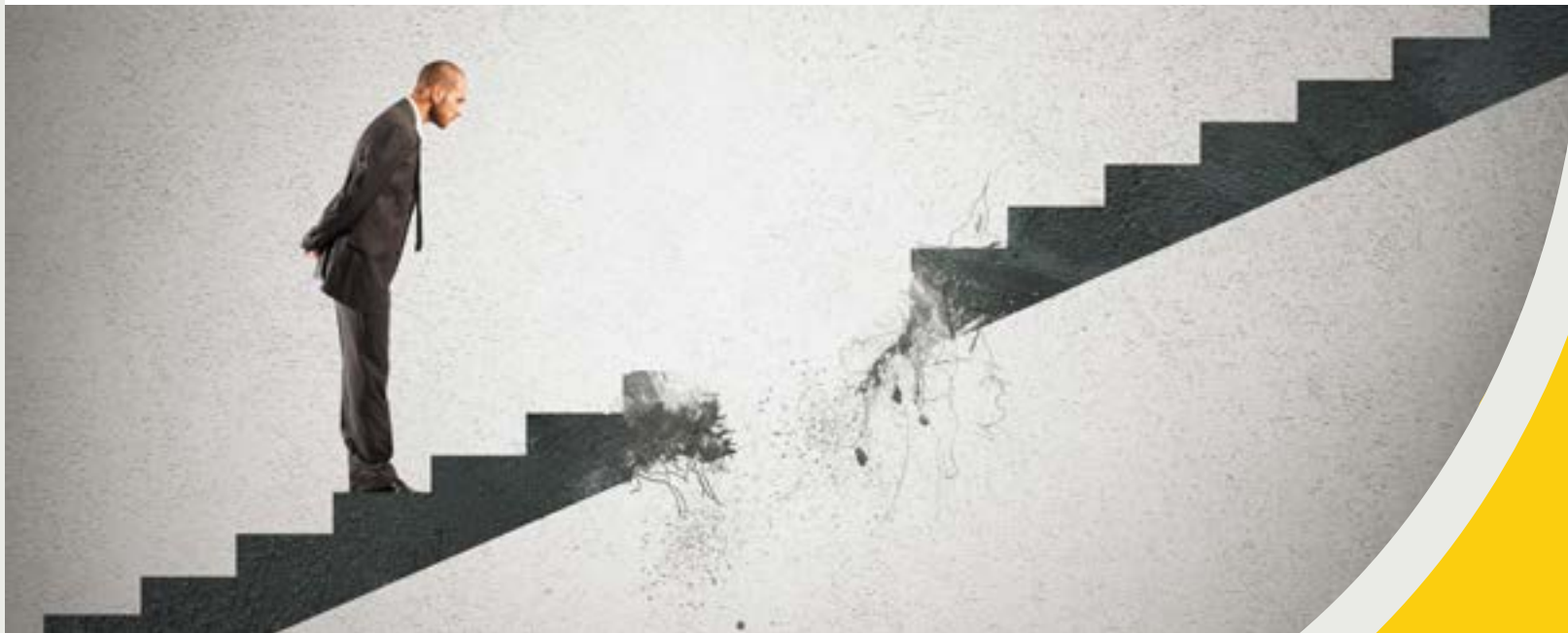
If you receive 25 emails per day you are being interrupted every 15 minutes!

If you receive 50 emails a day you are being interrupted every 10 minutes!

If you receive 100 emails per day you are being interrupted every 5 minutes!

It takes a minute to regain concentration after being interrupted by email!

If you are interrupted 50 times a day you are losing nearly 2 hours of productivity per day!



Email Challenge # 5 - We're not addicted to email...much!

Email Addiction Test:

Tick

Do you check emails first thing in the morning

Do you check emails more than once an hour?

Do you check email while you are on holiday ?

Do you "Reply All" when it's not relevant to everyone?

Do you respond to email as soon as it comes in?

Do you overuse the cc function to cover your butt or impress your manager?

Do you ever get involved in long email chains when a 2 minute phone call could resolve the matter?

Do you check work emails outside work hours?

Have you ever hit send/receive or refresh more than 10 times in a day?

Do you interrupt real activities that you are involved in to check email?

If you can say yes to at least some (if not all) of these answers you may be an email junkie.

While email isn't a drug it can be addictive!

Email Challenge #6 - Filing and searching for emails

Have you built a folder tree under your inbox? That folder list that keeps growing and growing, we then create sub-folders of our sub-folders. It gets harder to find emails and to file them correctly. You literally wasting hours of your life looking for information!

There's 3 things that you can do very quickly to set up an effective filing system.

1 | Separate your unfinished emails from you finished.

Your Inbox and the folders nested underneath should only have emails that are current. Once emails have been dealt with store them in a Reference Folder or Filing Cabinet.

2 | Set up 5 Primary Folders.

You may have some specific folders to you role but keep the number of primary folders low, how about you try:

- Clients**
- Team**
- Projects**
- Admin**
- General**

Put all your existing folders under one of these folder categories. If an email that could be stored in two or more of these primary folders choose the one that is highest. For example, if an email could be filed in Team or Projects choose Team.

3 | Rely on the Search function

The ability to search for email based on who it's from, the subject, attachments and more is now lightning fast. So, instead of creating dozens of folders rely on the search function to find emails.

It is faster to use search than it is to look though folders to find an email!

Email Challenge #7 - Email Communication Sins

Overusing the CC function. No need to impress your boss that much!

Sending loooooong emails with no clear call to action

Poor Subject Matter

Being trigger happy with Reply All and sending to All Users

Sending ambiguous emails

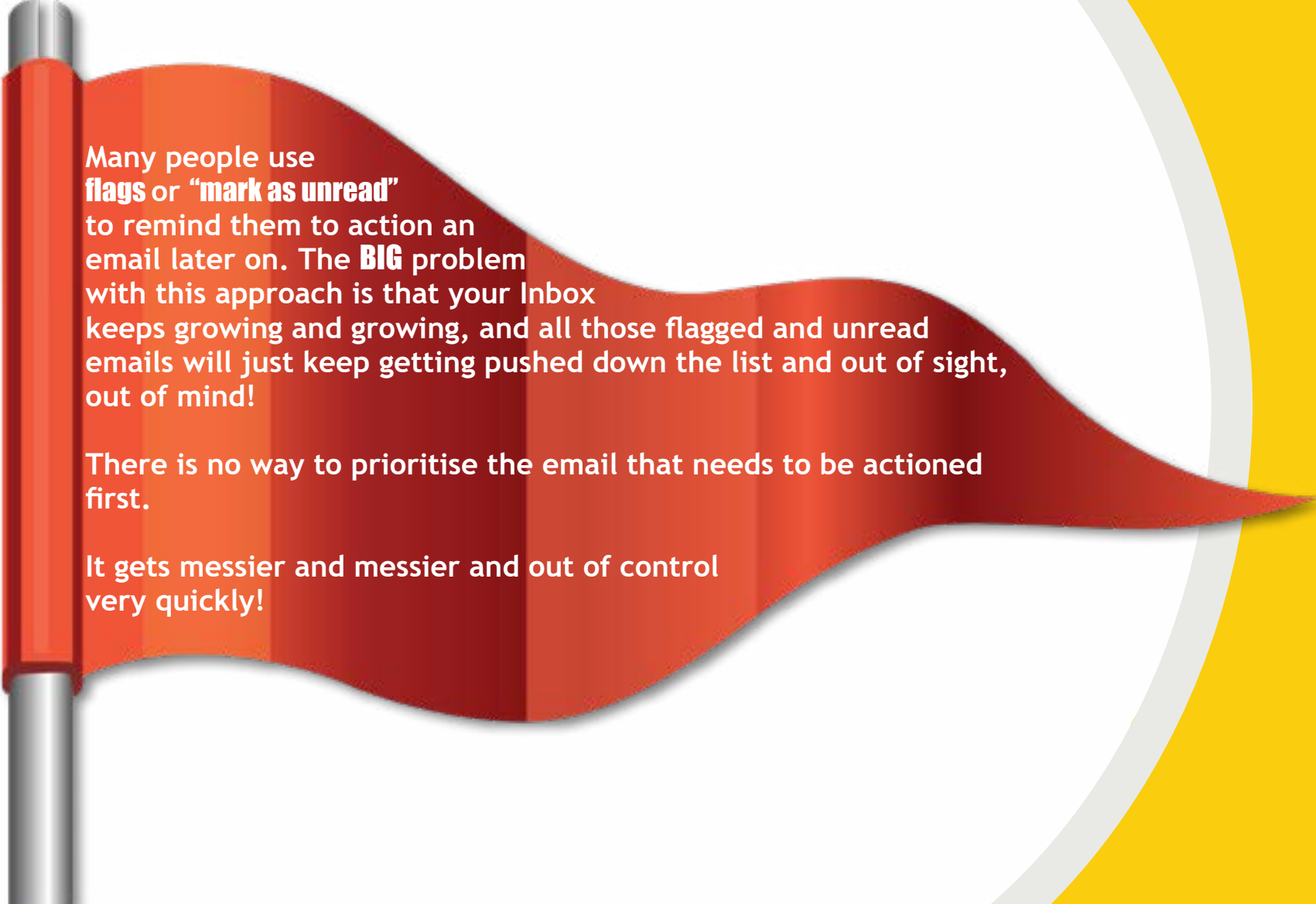


Email Challenge #8 - Email is not collaborative



Email was never designed for collaborative work. It is easy to be snared by an email discussion between half a dozen people that go back and forth over several days with no real resolution. Perhaps a face to face meeting or a phone call would've solved the issue quicker!

Email Challenge #9 - Flagging emails and marking as unread



Many people use **flags** or “**mark as unread**” to remind them to action an email later on. The **BIG** problem with this approach is that your Inbox keeps growing and growing, and all those flagged and unread emails will just keep getting pushed down the list and out of sight, out of mind!

There is no way to prioritise the email that needs to be actioned first.

It gets messier and messier and out of control very quickly!

If The Inbox was Mastered, how might it change your life?



Email Mastery - Quick tips

1 | Turn off your email notifications

If you are still receiving notifications each time you receive an email you will be tempted to stop working and look at your emails dozens of times a day. You will be amazed at the quiet you will experience just by doing this.

2 | Don't leave emails in your Inbox - it's not a To Do List or a Filing Cabinet

Put all your emails that need actioning on a to do list, everything else is deleted or filed.

3 | Schedule time to check email (don't respond every time an email comes in)

Try to only check email 3 or 4 times a day rather than being responsive every time it comes in.

4 | Set up rules for your Inbox

Most email clients have a filter or rules that you can set up to automatically file emails in to a folder or automatically delete unwanted emails. For example, newsletters or cc'd email could be automatically filed.

5 | Don't respond to low priority emails before lunch!

6 | Don't set up dozens of sub folders

Consolidate your folder and rely on the 'Search' function more.

7 | Create templates for emails that you send on a regular basis

8 | If you send less emails you will receive less email



Email Mastery - Etiquette...have some email manners!

Every organisation should set and agree on rules and guidelines about email behaviour. Here's some ideas that could get that conversation started:

Be Clear in the Subject line (examples of good and bad)

Poor Subject line: Help Please.

Good Subject line: John can you assist me with the Samuels proposal?

Poor subject line: Wanna meet up.

Good subject line: Can we meet to discuss the Samuels proposal on Friday?

Use the CC field as an FYI (or better yet don't use it at all)

When the Cc field is being used there is no action required.

Be careful when using CAPS and !!!!

It comes across as SHOUTING!!

Set emails to expire if they are only relevant for a short amount of time

If an email is only relevant for a short time, for example, an announcement that someone is away sick, set the email to expire at 5pm that day.

Communicate the times that your are responding to email

Set up an auto responder that communicates when you check emails

For example:

I am currently responding to email twice a day at 12pm and 4pm .

If you require assistance with something urgent that can not wait till the specified 12pm or 4pm, please call me on ...

Thank you for understanding.

Email Mastery - Etiquette...have some email manners!

Is email the right form of communication?

Don't collaborate via email. When emails turn into long chains pick up the phone or set up a meeting.

Be careful with Reply All and All Users

If everyone in the chain doesn't need to read an email, there is no need to clog everybody's Inboxes with unnecessary emails.

Never send an email when you are upset or angry

Sleep on it and type it up in the morning.

Answer emails promptly

Emails were built for speed. Respond quickly to avoid uncertainty.

Using Bcc field

Use Bcc when sending to a large number of recipients or when privacy is an issue.

Don't use abbreviations and Emoticons

Quite simply it is unprofessional and inappropriate in a business environment.

Don't attach unnecessary files

Ask people how they would like files sent to them. For example use Dropbox.

Don't hide behind email

If there is something important to say, say it face to face. It's easy to avoid difficult conversations by sending an email but an issue can escalate quickly when emails are sent back and forth.

Don't reply just to say thank you!

Be personable

End an email with "Have a good weekend"

Email Mastery - Writing an effective email

Keep your messages simple and clear - short sentences and bullet points make your email easier to read on both computer screens and Smart Phones.

Keep emails short and state the action required up front.

Use short paragraphs for longer emails.

Which type of email are you sending?

- **Self-fulfilling** | you are just trying to inform someone but don't need a response,
- **Inquiring** | need advice or information,
- **Open-ended dialogue** | wanting to keep communication open, or
- **Action Required** | asking the recipient to do something for you.

Understanding your intention will help you construct your email better.



Skip the long introductions, backgrounds and compliments and get to the point.

Stick to the facts, don't tell the WHOLE story.

Use simple English, don't show off your big words.

Email Mastery - Take breaks from email

We've talked about email addiction previously and like anything that can be addictive we need to set some healthy boundaries.

Remember there's no such thing as an email emergency.

No email will self-destruct if you don't respond to it straight away.
If someone REALLY needs to get hold of you they will phone or text.

Give yourself an email curfew

Treat yourself like a teenager and have a cut off time for checking emails.

Schedule email times

Set aside different times in your day to schedule and process email rather than being reactive to it all day long.

Have an Email Free Day once a week

Break the cycle a little bit and have an email free day once every week. It will help train your brain not to be so responsive to your email all the time.

Take an extended break from email

Every now and then try having an extended break from email. You'll be amazed at the creative space you will have in your brain.

Email Mastery - Managing your Smart Phone

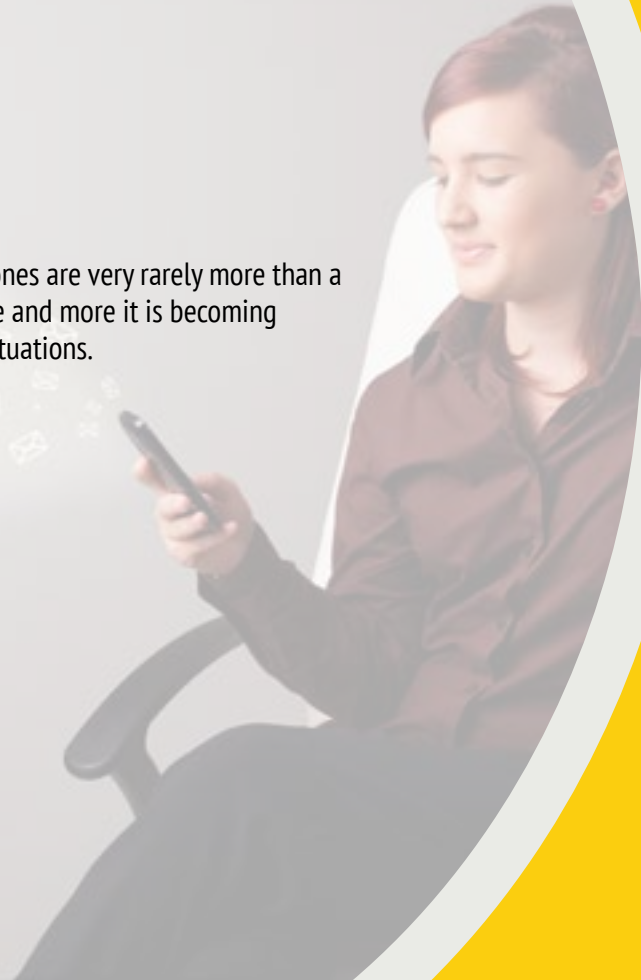
We now have access to all of the world's information and can send and receive emails all from a hand held device! We are more efficient, more creative and more productive than ever! Through the power of this technology, age-old obstacles to human interaction like locations, language and limited information are breaking down. We can now communicate from anywhere at any time.

It's an exciting time to be alive.

HOWEVER...

The downside is that we are now contactable 24 hours a day/7 days per week, our phones are very rarely more than a few meters from our side and it can detrimentally affect social interactions when more and more it is becoming acceptable to be checking and using our phones during meal times and other social situations.

- 1 | Have times where you switch off.
- 2 | Be considerate! Turn phones off during meal times and social situations.
- 3 | Create short cuts for text that you use regularly
- 4 | Set your email account to check manually (not constantly).
- 5 | Synchronise your Outlook, Gmail or Lotus Notes Calendar, To Do List, Contacts and Notes to your phone. But set personal boundaries for phone free time
- 6 | Research time saving apps. For example, document control, budgeting, time tracking and more!



Testimonials.....

Time Management is a subject our business community have requested to run over the past few years, we continue to ask Fiona back to present this subject due to her broad knowledge on the subject and direct delivery techniques. Over the years Fiona has presented comprehensive sessions on managing the clutter of emails, interruptions, and reactionary behaviour. She has run sessions on creating a realistic perspective on effective time usage, how it is important to plan to work on long-term and short-term tasks, and why achieving greater results is key to develop effective planning strategies and clear priorities. Every time Fiona presents we have requests asking for another session, or a longer session.

Lynda Bredin | Glen Eira | City Council

After completing time management training with Fiona Newton over 4 years ago, I am still practicing what she preached each day. Such practical advice, tips and techniques presented in way that was interesting and made applicable to any person in any position. With not a lot of practice the methodologies I learnt were easily integrated into my busy work day and hectic family life enabling me to be a far more efficient at work, rest and play. Thank you Fiona, you saved my bacon.

Renee McNaughton | Team Leader | Technology Support Queensland University of Technology

At first I was skeptical as to what Fiona was really going to be able to offer me as I thought I was already pretty organised. I used tasks, I filed emails, I'm organised! But in a short space of time Fiona really showed me a few things that have had a profound effect on how I manage my time, tasks and emails. The result of all this is I no longer let the email inbox schedule my working day which has helped dramatically with my time management and subsequently my stress levels. Fiona's tips and strategies were easy to implement and stick to and I now couldn't imagine working without a programme like Microsoft Office and all its functionality. I would happily recommend Fiona to anyone or any organisation no matter how big or small.

Penny Guild | Guild Architects

PR DUCTIVE

EVENTS AND TRAINING

We deliver workshops and personalised coaching sessions to help your team perform at their best and achieve exceptional results! In today's competitive workplace we need to be constantly learning, growing and developing our skills. The team at Productive Events and Training are committed to delivering exceptional training and coaching for your staff in the format that suits you.

At Productive Events and Training we specialise in customising the training experience for your team. Our professional development training can be delivered in any format – Full day intensive workshops, half day express sessions, lunchtime learning, one on one coaching (face to face or via Skype) based on your learning needs and time commitments.

We offer:

Learning at Lunch Sessions | for up to 12 people (onsite training)
Full Day packages | for up to 12 people (in-house customised training)
Half Day Express | for up to 12 people (in-house customised training)
90 minute session | One on One coaching (at your work station)

To learn more about us please visit our website:

w: productivityspecialists.com.au

Or to chat to Fiona or one of our friendly staff please email:

e: fnewton@productivityspecialists.com.au

