*Email Hail---Tips to control the damage*

We are drowning in a flood of Emails:

- Ignore your computer for an hour—50 unread emails.
- Take a break for a day—600 emails to deal with in the morning.
- $100 million projects are relying only on Outlook or Gmail to convey critical design data and confirm key decisions. Backup, version control, central repository, searching--these and many other management procedures are weak.

Try searching by sender, conversation, or key word—good luck! "Group by conversation" and you'll miss too much. Ignore anything that you are only CC'd on and the crises will eventually land in your lap. Email "rules", quick steps, categories, and macros can help somewhat, if you are a diligent programmer. No technique within Outlook really solves the problem and no third-party system has come on the market to save us.

Some strategies have been tried: I used an ePM software once which forced you to code the email subject line with a 24-character sequence that required a secret decoding ring and an 11 X 17 cheat sheet. And don't get me started on texting as an effective alternative!

So, for the overwhelmed, let me suggest a few techniques that could reduce your stress.

- **Keep it short.** Maybe not 140 characters, but no more than what would fit on a single PowerPoint slide.

- **Proofread aloud** before hitting send. Be concise yet coherent. Simple words. Bullets. And check those addressees one last time.

- **Program a 2-minute delay** before sending. This single technique has saved many a career.

- **Never "reply all".** Never. Failure to follow this rule has sunk many a career.

- **Follow the three-bounce rule:** If you receive an email that has been back and forth three times—don't email again. Pick up the phone. Walk across the hall. Invite someone to lunch!

- **Never pile on.** A "reply all" email that says, "ditto," "I agree," "you da man!" or some silly Atta Boy is not appreciated.

- **Use attachments** and be precise in the file name, such as including the project number and revision date. We can file an attachment in a folder and quickly sort a folder by date or filename. Harder to do with an email.

- **Set up a project addressee**. When you email anyone on the team, also cc the project addressee—and at least you have a single project repository for the entire team that could be searched if the need is urgent.

- **Use "Junk" or "Ignore" aggressively.** But only on senders you are confident you want to never hear from again.

- **Copy to One Note** those critical emails you believe may need to be kept. One Note search functions work better: You'll be able to find important information faster.

- **Minimize the distraction.** Turn off the pop up boxes, the flashing icons, the obnoxious "Presto" notification sound. Set aside specific periods to pay attention to your inbox, thus allowing time for focused, productive work.

And the most important rule in corporate life:

- **Don't be a jerk.** Use "high priority" and "request read receipt" only for the critical few. Use "delayed send" on the weekend or at night to deliver during normal work hours.

Strive to balance email with more important aspects of your work life. Perhaps you'll find that as your rise in your career, your peers appreciate a 60-second phone call that is more efficient and avoids confusion.  The hurt feelings caused by a quickly read, poorly worded email damage the relationships you need to be successful.

And, of course, if you have further thoughts, suggestions or critiques of this…….just send an email to [dcd@davidcdixon.com](mailto:dcd@davidcdixon.com).