

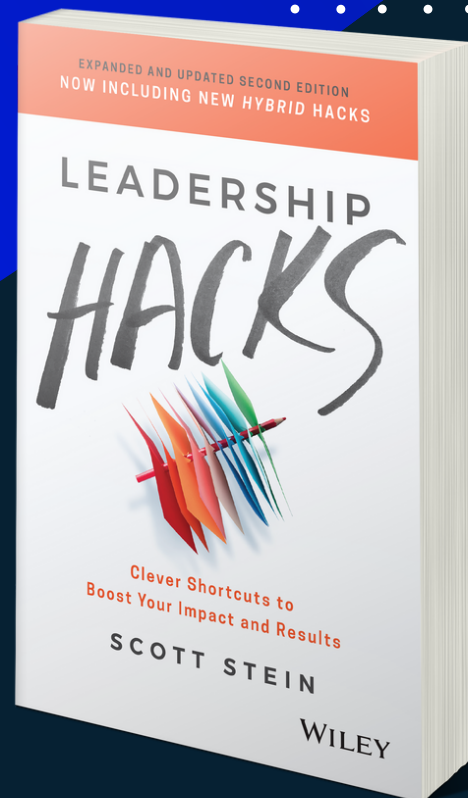
Scott Stein

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INBOX HACKS RESOURCE

How often do you
check your inbox?

Discover useful tips and
hacks that can save you time
and improve your
communication.



SCHEDULE



TIME



FOCUS



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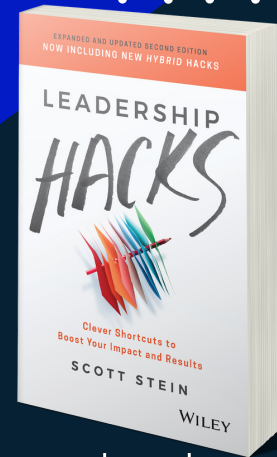
There has been a significant increase in digital communication and email since the beginning of the new millennium, creating a drastic impact on leaders and their productivity. Many leaders I've worked with over the years have made the observation that they can't keep up with their email communications.

Inboxes are constantly full of new information: as you're reading one email, a new one is already coming in. For many leaders there's not enough time to manage their email

According to a July 2012 McKinsey Global Institute report, leaders and employees spend an average of 2.6 hours per day reading and answering emails, which is an average of 13 hours per week of lost time. This is a massive amount of time that needs to be hacked! In looking at ways to improve your approach to email communications, there are two hack areas you should consider: inbox hacks and sending hacks.

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Common challenges with email



There are three main challenges that need to be managed to deal more efficiently with emails:

- The volume of emails received. Leaders tend to receive more emails than many frontline or middle-level managers. This is because we're often copied in to 'keep you in the loop'. This also creates a distraction if you're working on a task and new, unrelated emails come in.
- Time to read through emails received and when to check for new emails. Once the emails come in it takes time to read through them and identify what it is you need to know. This in itself creates a challenge because unnecessarily reading through some emails can take up time that could be better spent reading and actioning other, more important emails.
- What to do with emails once you've read them. It may be that you've been copied in to receive ongoing information or updates, in which case you don't need to do anything with the email. Alternatively, you may need to respond with a decision or answer, or take further action. Regardless, viewing emails only takes up a portion of time - the majority of time is generally spent analysing and responding to the emails.

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3 - 2 - 1 - zero approach



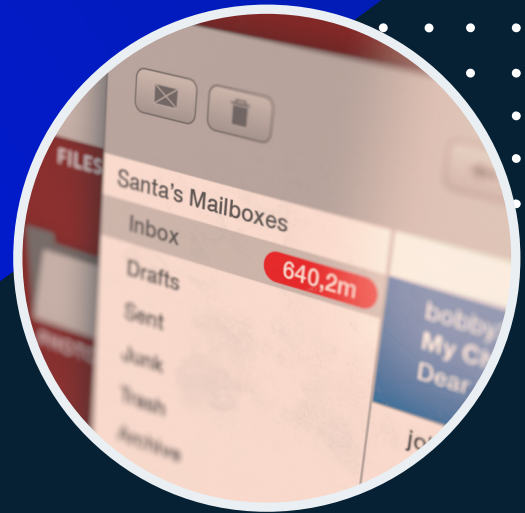
As human beings we are wired for constant gratification and satisfaction. We also look for ways to distract us from doing challenging or difficult tasks. The New York Times's best-selling author Kevin Kruse, in his book *15 Secrets Successful People Know about Time Management*, studied the time-management habits of billionaires, entrepreneurs and Olympic athletes. Kruse recommends checking your email inbox using what he calls the 321-Zero system.

He advocates scheduling three times per day to check your email (morning, noon and night) and setting your phone timer to 21 minutes as a game to get your inbox to zero. Although this will usually not be enough time to get through all your emails, this approach is designed to keep you focused because you won't have time for distractions.

This will reduce the amount of time you spend checking and rechecking to see if an email has come in, which can ultimately distract you even further.

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4 step email hack



1

SCAN

Rather than taking the time to read through and respond to each individual email, start by scanning your inbox. Take a quick look through the emails that you haven't read and get a sense of what they involve, who they're from and whether or not you need them. This will help you get a quick overview of the task ahead and get your mindset focused in a short period of time.

2

DELETE

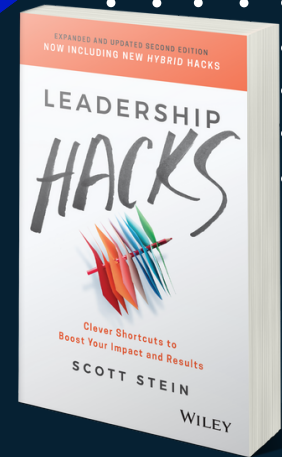
Delete emails that have no benefit or are irrelevant. This way you eliminate the visual clutter in your inbox, which will allow you to more easily identify and deal with the remaining, more important emails. This step helps make the final two steps faster, saving you more time in the long run.

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4 step email hack



3 SORT



Once you've deleted irrelevant emails, the next step is to sort the remaining emails based on their level of importance. Most email programs will automatically display your emails according to the time they were sent. They can also be sorted in the following ways:

- By Header. One of the easiest ways to quickly organise your emails is by sorting them based who sent them (From) or by subject.
- By Folder. Another strategy is to create folders with labels that you can drag emails into. Outlook also has a function that will allow you to flag the priority status of each email. It can be useful to create folder labelled Action today, Inform, Waiting for, and Done.
- Using Automatic Sort: Email programs such as Gmail provide enable you to automatically split emails into three categories when they arrive: Primary, Social and Promotions. You can also add folders and split them further.

For specific steps on how to set up these functions, do a quick Google search. There are a number of different ways to sort your inbox try a couple of approaches to see which one works for you.

INBOX HACKS RESOURCE

4 step email hack



4

RESPOND

The final step is to respond. Rather than just hit reply and start typing, if you want to 'hack' your approach you need to know what the main message of your response will be. Specifically, this is what you want the receiver to do with your email response. Generally, when you respond to an email it will fall into one of five categories: FYI, share/gather information, decide, take action or meet.

To make it easier for the people you are responding to, make sure you let them know which of these categories your email is offering or requesting. This will help save them time and reduce the clutter of emails that results when people just hitting reply without being specific about what they want others to do.

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Scott Stein has helped thousands of leaders around the world. As author of *Leadership Hacks: Clever Strategies to Boost Your Impact and Results*, he is considered the global authority on implementing fast track leadership strategies that get results.

Scott is a Certified Virtual Presenter with E-Speakers. He is a leading international speaker and an expert on leadership and influence who helps many of the world's best known brands and government agencies to mobilise their leaders and their people.

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