

# **Inbox Zero**

**a sane approach to email insanity**

by Merlin Mann

[InboxZero.com](http://InboxZero.com)



# Adobe Illustrator 88™

Mike Schuster, Teri Pettit, John MacMillan,  
Steve Schiller, John Kunze, Bill Paxton, and  
John Warnock.

Version 1.6.

Copyright ©1987,1988 Adobe Systems Incorporated.  
All Rights Reserved. Adobe Illustrator 88 and the  
Adobe Illustrator Logo are trademarks of Adobe  
Systems Incorporated. PANTONE® and PANTONE®  
MATCHING SYSTEM are registered trademarks of  
Pantone, Inc.

Personalized for:

.  
..

# **Inbox Zero**

**a sane approach to email insanity**

by Merlin Mann

[InboxZero.com](http://InboxZero.com)

**My weird,  
sad hobby**

# What people say about email

- ▶ Hundreds of messages a day
- ▶ Increased expectations
- ▶ “It’s like a second job.”
- ▶ Fighting and failing

# What this looks like

- ▶ Cognitive dissonance
- ▶ No consistent system
- ▶ Stress, shame, and burnt cycles

# So, what to do?

- ▶ **Get realistic**  
Realign attitudes and expectations
- ▶ **Get a system**  
Develop a consistent action-based system that works
- ▶ **Get better**  
Learn healthier habits going forward

**1. Get realistic**

**2. Get a *system***

**3. Get better**



**Time and  
attention  
are finite**

**Demands on you  
time and attention  
are infinite**

# Joel Spolsky's Box



idea swiped from:  
**[joelonsoftware.com](http://joelonsoftware.com)**

**So:**

**What's  
valuable to  
*you?***

**You are the  
traffic cop**

Only you control  
your actions

**Turning email into  
*useful actions***

1. Get realistic
2. Get a *system*
3. Get better

# **My weird local sandwich shop**

# **The keys to our system**

- ▶ **Process regularly**
- ▶ **Touch everything  
once**
- ▶ **Liberate actions**



# Processing is...

- ▶ != responding
- ▶ more than “checking”
- ▶ about decision-making

# No fiddling, no scrolling

Always know precisely where things go

# **The big question of processing**

“What in the hell  
does this mean to  
me, right now?”

# Processing outcomes (4)

1. Delete
2. Respond now
3. Defer for later response
4. Action

1

**No, seriously:  
*Delete.***

# 2

## Respond now

- ▶ Short replies
- ▶ Generally less than a minute or two
- ▶ Ask a question, if needed

**3**

## **Respond later**

- ▶ Move to a “to respond” folder
- ▶ Careful!
- ▶ Regularly return to vanquish the pile

# 4 Action

- ▶ Do it now
- ▶ Generate a *to-do*  
(*but* put it someplace else)
- ▶ Record future time commitments



# Processing: Pick *one*

1. Delete
2. Respond
3. Defer
4. Action

**Email's just  
the order**

**"Action"  
is the sandwich**

1. Get realistic
2. Get a *system*
3. Get better

***Do email less***

**2,400 times**

# ***Do email less***

- ▶ Turn off auto-check
- ▶ Schedule email time
- ▶ Make faster decisions

# Use filters and templates

- ▶ Low-priority notifications
- ▶ “Noisy” lists
- ▶ Boilerplate responses

# Keep it simple

- ▶ Stay focused on action
- ▶ Minimize filing
- ▶ Know when to escalate



**Don't live in email**

(all the interesting stuff is outside)

**Inbox Zero**

[inboxzero.com](https://inboxzero.com)

**Thanks.**