

# Faculty Development

## Career Tools

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### Getting Organized

An e-newsletter of organizing tips for faculty members. May 2006.

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*"The overloaded brain and the overloaded life have become the norm. A person has to be quite deliberate to avoid overload."*

-- Dr. Edward Hallowell, Author of *CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap!*

→ Some pages will open in a new browser window. M. D. Anderson does not endorse external sites.

### Editor's Note

It's easy to understand how overwhelming e-mail can become when you look at the statistics. Around the world, 11 billion e-mails were sent each day in 2003. We are caught up in a gluttony of e-mails, and in the end, we're the only ones who can slow or stop the frenzy.

Spending time on the computer, watching TV or fiddling with your Blackberry -- or what he terms "screensucking" -- can be addictive, said Dr. Edward Hallowell, author of *CrazyBusy: Overstretched, Overbooked, and About to Snap!*, during his recent presentation at M. D. Anderson. Hallowell is the country's ADD guru, having written several books on the topic.

"A modern addiction, screensucking is like smoking cigarettes: Once you're hooked, it is extremely tough to quit," Hallowell writes. Think of the people waiting at the airport who seem to be twitching for a little screen time. Or think of the slight panic you have when the computer or Internet lines are down, and you're cut off from e-mail.

The best defense is to turn off the mesmerizing screen when you're not looking at it. Hallowell also suggests keeping e-mail hours or using a timer to remind yourself to log off. "Insight can lead to moderation," he said.

A few other insights on e-mail management follow.

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### E-Mail Management

When it comes to e-mail inbox maintenance, you need to remember **The 3 R's -- Read, Respond and Remove** -- said K. J. McCorry, author of *Organize Your Work Day in No Time*. As you read each e-mail, you need to delete, delegate, do it, or defer it, but the key is to make a decision. "Just reading it doesn't mean you've dealt with it," she said.

### Taking action in Lotus Notes

One way to take action on an e-mail is by putting the information into your calendar or your To Do list. In Lotus Notes, save yourself some re-typing time, and click on "Copy into" on your open e-mail at the top of the bar. Choose either "New Calendar

Entry" or "New To Do." This will automatically put your e-mail into your calendar or To Do list. You can change the date and subject line.

The e-mail is copied into the description of the calendar or To Do listing, so you have the information at your fingertips. If you don't need to file the original e-mail, then delete the e-mail from your inbox since a copy will still be in your calendar or To Do listing.

McCorry outlined two ways to keep tabs on the e-mails you need to take some type of action on:

1. Your first option is to keep those e-mails in your inbox. Actively remove anything else that has been completed.
2. A second method is to mark anything "unread" as a reminder to take action.

In his book *Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity*, David Allen suggests creating an @Action folder and parking any e-mails requiring action into it. Then your Inbox is for only new e-mails. The most important thing is figure out a system that works best for you.

### **For the e-mail you need to keep**

Create file folders by topics and file your e-mails as you would paper files.

Periodically purge your e-mails, especially those with large attachments. In Lotus Notes, click on the arrow next to "Size." This sorts your e-mails by size, automatically putting the biggest e-mails at the top, and you can delete the bigger e-mails to make more space on your server.

Attachments you need to keep should be detached and placed on your computer hard drive or server.

### **Reducing e-mail**

Talk to your staff, colleagues, and anyone else who sends you e-mail regarding copying and blind-copying you on e-mails. Ask them to copy you only on the most important e-mails.

In return, think about whom you are sending or copying e-mails to. Sometimes a phone call resolves an issue much easier and faster than a chain of e-mails.

When you're registering or purchasing anything on a website, check the forms for notices on sending you future e-mails and promotions, and be sure to read the fine print since sometimes the companies are tricky, said McCorry.

Speak up and ask the friend or relative who sends you jokes and chain e-mails to stop. If they're notorious for sending those "urban legend" e-mail scams -- the ones about needles in a movie theater, the perfume scam, Bill Gates sending you money, etc., it's time to send them the links to [Urban Legends](#) and [Snopes](#).

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### **Re-Energizing Your Work & Life**

If you want to re-energize your work and life, it's important to ask yourself what you're tolerating, says life coach Laura Berman Fortgang, author of *Living Your Best Life* and *Now What? 90 Days to a New Life Direction*.

Fortgang suggests making a list of everything from work and home that you're tolerating, and this could be clutter, unfinished projects, situations at work or home, other people's behavior, or frustrations you have. "We need to clean up our messes, whether it's clutter, emotional or

something else," she said. "Our mess blocks energy and clarity. So if you clean up your mess, you get your energy and clarity back."

During his presentation, Hallowell advised the audience to dump their "leeches" and cultivate their "lilies." Leeches are the people and projects that drain you, and lilies are the people and projects that lift you and give you energy. "You need one thing that you look forward to every day," said Hallowell.

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### Cool Products

The [KangaRoom Storage](#) company just launched its website. Inventory includes:

The [Hanging 5 Shelf Organizer](#) for your child's closet gives kids a slot for each day of the week. Great way to prepare for the week by laying out all of their clothes.

The [Divided Cord Storage Organizer](#) rounds up all those computer, PDA, and cell phone cords.

The [Travel Cord Storage and Organizer](#) gives you space for all of your cords when you're traveling, and it comes with a surge protector that allows you to charge up to eight devices.

The [Collapsible Linen Closet Storage](#) unit is a great way to store sheets and towels, and there is a space for a label.

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### Got Clutter?

I have developed 15-minute, 30-minute and 45-minute presentations on organizing and time management. Moving to a new building? I also have a 15-minute presentation on preparing for a move for your department.

I also do one-on-one sessions in your office and help you come up with a solution. To schedule a presentation or a one-on-one appointment, call (713) 792-8061 or e-mail [Janice Simon](mailto:jsimon@mdanderson.org) (jsimon@mdanderson.org).

*Happy Organizing!*

-- Janice

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