

Ban is wrong approach to email overload (infographic)

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Even though middle managers typically spend 100 hours a year on irrelevant email, eliminating or limiting internal email to employees is a misguided strategy, suggests research released by LCWA Research Group and communications consultancy The Grossman Group.

The 2012 Work-Related Email Perception Study, *Enough Already! Stop Bad Email*, shows that while middle managers spend some 2.5 weeks (100 hours) a year on irrelevant email, they don't want their ability to use email taken away or interrupted, no matter what time of day, for fear of missing important information. They do, however, want policies that could help reduce the volume of irrelevant email landing in their inboxes.



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Sixty-one per cent of executives and 55pc of middle managers said email policies that reinforce email etiquette/rules would be very effective in their organisation.

Other findings from the study include:

- Executives (84pc), middle managers (83pc), and employees (77pc) overwhelmingly agree email is an effective and necessary communication tool.
- Only 8pc of executives, 15pc of middle managers, and 11pc of employees said limiting email during normal business hours would be very effective.
- Only 11pc of executives, 20pc of middle managers and 13pc of employees said limiting email outside normal business hours would be very effective.
- Only 3pc of executives, 12pc of middle managers, and 7pc of employees said eliminating email outside normal business hours would be very effective.

"We've seen companies around the world experimenting with email blackouts or timeouts," said David Grossman, communication expert, author, founder and CEO, The Grossman Group.

"However, our research reveals that's not the most effective approach. We know employees are overloaded by their inboxes and it's causing them stress, yet our research shows it's email misbehaviours that need to be addressed," Grossman added.

These misbehaviours include back-and-forth replies, using email when a phone call or meeting would be better, using 'Reply all', poorly written emails, and copying others on email when it isn't necessary.

The study participants indicated they want flexibility to access work-related email after hours because they want to make sure they don't miss anything (cited by 52pc of middle managers, 51pc of supervisors and 48pc of employees), and they want to prepare for the upcoming day (cited by 51pc of middle managers, 45pc of supervisors and 47pc of employees).

Here, an infographic looks at the cost of email overload and its effect on middle managers:

DEFROST THE FROZEN MIDDLE

Information overload is a paralyzing problem. Middle managers can't prioritize and move projects forward.

Email is a major problem. In 2013, 294 billion work emails were sent.

Middle managers are feeling *the most pain*

- Middle managers are **50% more likely** to access work email **outside** normal business hours
- 30%** experience work-life balance issues
- 29%** fear missing relevant information
- 21%** experience stress

Defrost the *Frozen Middle* in Your Company

55% of middle managers say policies that **reinforce email etiquette/rules** would be very effective

What we are seeing:

- Etiquette guidelines
- Alternative solutions and channels
- Mandated time off emails
- Email elimination/cold turkey
- Lawsuits from employees
- Regulations from governments

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