

# Inbox in Tension

Studies of multitasking often point to e-mail as a source of interruptions, increased task switching, and higher levels of stress. However, e-mail is also an indispensable tool for disseminating information within companies and coordinating the efforts of distributed teams. Since e-mail is, in many ways, the ubiquitous communications tool of the information workplace, we are conducting an extensive, mixed-methods field study to characterize and quantify the costs and benefits of e-mail to both individuals and groups. Our research will inform the design of computational tools and workplace policies that will help to strike a better balance in the ways that e-mail is used - to facilitate group interactions while not overloading or overwhelming individual information workers.



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