The [nearly] Ultimate Guide to Ending Email Overload

Bonitasoft

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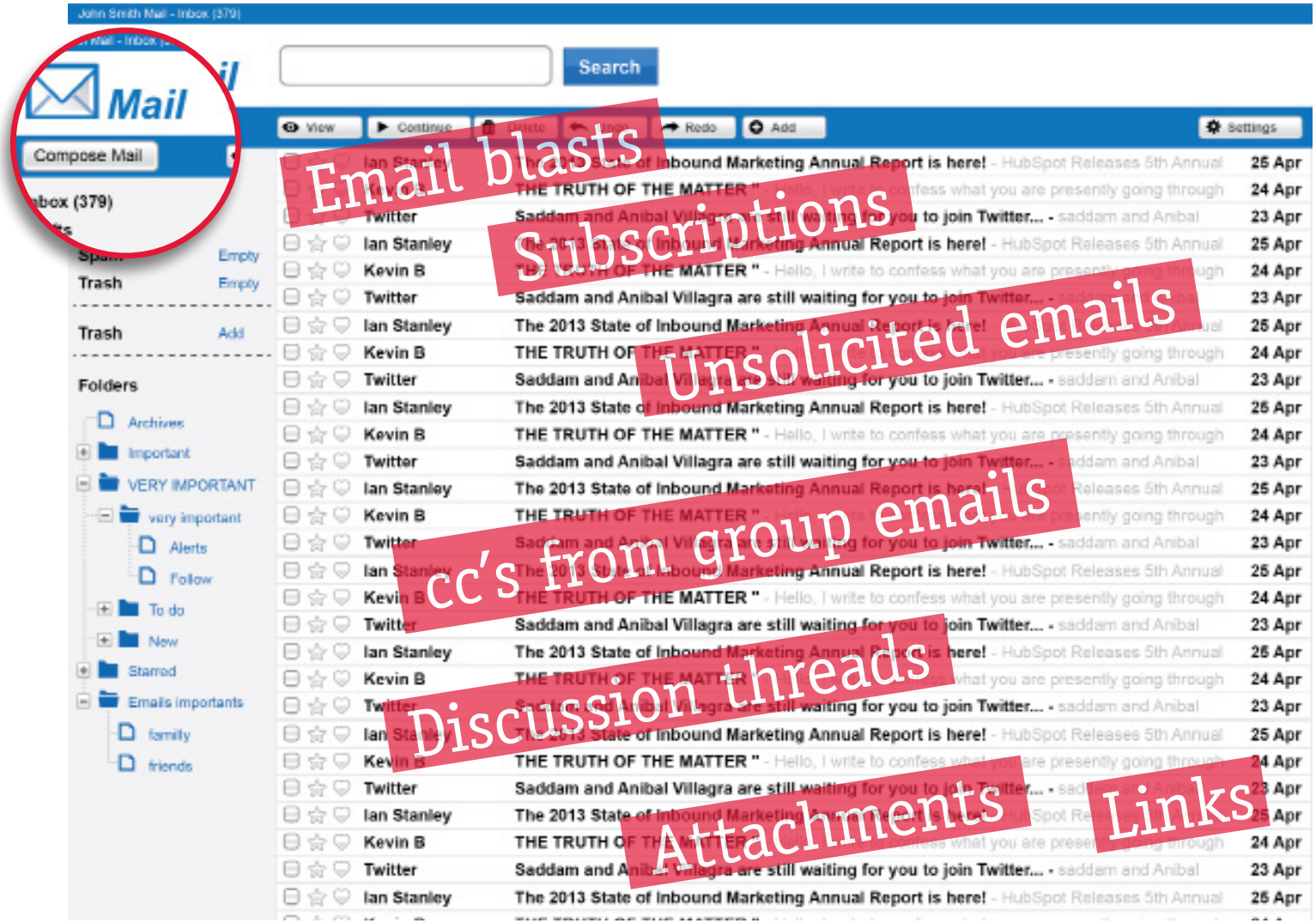
INBOX OVERLOAD!



Email can be hard to prioritize

Email systems order inboxes by default - by listing the most recent message first, not the *most important* ones first.
The default inbox mixes up subject/projects.

Then there is the frequent misuse of the "CC" function!

Key people may miss the thread, or some messages in the thread, if they were not included in the cc list.
Almost a third of corporate e-mail is "occupational spam" caused by overuse of CC, BCC and REPLY ALL!

A TYPICAL EMAIL BLITZ

Holiday request March 24, 2013 7:54:13 PM
Can I have the last 2 weeks in July off?

RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 9:13:22 AM
Send me your PTO request.

RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 9:30:13 AM
Where is the PTO request form?

RE: RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 9:31:13 AM
Here, use this. I think it's the latest version. *(sends attachment)*

RE: RE: RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 9:33:13 AM
(downloads, fills in, scans and sends PTO request)

RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 9:36:13 AM
Wait, our annual sales meeting is during that time. Can you move your dates?

RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 9:50:13 AM
Uh, ok, I can take the 2 weeks before. *(downloads, fills in, scans and sends new PTO request)*

RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 10:13:01 AM
I need to find someone to replace you.

RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 10:13:59 AM
How about Jill?

RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 11:13:05 AM
No, she's on travel that week.

RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 11:53:13 AM
How about Pete?

RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 13:03:31 AM
Yes, OK. That'll work. *(signs and returns PTO request)*

RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: RE: Holiday request March 25, 2013 13:13:31 AM
Oh and don't forget to mark your dates on the travel calendar

Does this seem familiar?

Jack would like to request some vacation time…

And so it goes. How many emails fly back and forth for the entire department's vacation scheduling?

BUSINESS IS OVERLOADED

Atos, an international IT services company, is convinced that **email** is a burden on its employees, and has committed to axing the communication tool from its offices – for internal communication – **entirely by 2014.**

Thierry Breton,
Chairman and CEO of Atos :

"Atos is evaluating a number of new tools to replace internal email including collaborative and social media tools. Those include the Atos Wiki, which allows all employees to communicate by contributing or modifying online content, and Office Communicator, the company's online chat system which allows video conferencing, and file and application sharing."

And Atos is not alone - for many companies, email is simply inefficient.

Klick, a Canadian digital marketing company with more than 200 employees, now uses email only to communicate with external clients. Capgemini, the IT services company, says it has reduced its internal email traffic by 40 per cent in 18 months.

"We believe email is fundamentally unproductive. You need to sift through too many documents and things get lost."

Leerom Segal,
president and chief executive of Klick

112
Number of emails sent and received per day by the average corporate user

71%
Percentage of worldwide email traffic that was spam (November 2011)

19%
Percentage of spam emails delivered to corporate email inboxes despite spam filters

0.39%
Percentage of email that was malicious (November 2011)

THERE'S LOTS OF ADVICE ON MANAGING EMAIL OVERLOAD

Decide which messages to keep and which to delete. If it has no value and you'll never look at it or use it, then delete it.

Delete unnecessary messages, without opening them at all.

Reply to e-mail by blog. There are other public ways to share when appropriate.

Write short emails.

File messages you need to keep.

Create and apply rules that send messages into file folders automatically.

Use distribution lists if you mail the same group of people repeatedly.

Delete! Or at the very least, file messages into folders.

Turn off notifications. Permanently. Email alerts are highly distracting.

Use categories or tags to organize.

Flag messages that need follow-up.

Set aside a time during the day when you only handle e-mail.

Establish public protocols for communicating with the outside world.

Establish internal e-mail practices for formality, tone, brevity, distribution, responsiveness and timing.

Use special-purpose social software such as LinkedIn, Dopplr, Flickr, Delicious.

Close email when you need to focus.

"With enterprise social software solutions available on the market today, identify group uses of e-mail and move them to private workspaces. This creates a spam- and noise-free environment for the team. Or create more structured project workspaces with a process for archiving them at the end of the project."

Ross Mayfield,
Forbes Magazine

See More

PC Magazine

Forbes.

Inc.

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MAKE IT GO AWAY! (?)

Oliver Burkeman, columnist for the Guardian Newspaper, took a long hard **look at some tools** to help deal with **email overload.**

theguardian

News | Sport | Comment | Culture | Business | Money | Life & style

Life & style › This column will change your life

Series: This column will change your life

This column will change your life: information overload

If you're inundated by email, will pause buttons or boomerangs really help hold back the tide?

Gmail's *Inbox Pause* adds a button that lets you halt the incoming torrent. But, as Burkeman points out.

Inbox Pause doesn't reduce the quantity of emails that bombard you. Nor does it help you answer them faster.

Google's *Priority Inbox* sifts email into «important» and «everything else», but many who use it don't really use it to prioritize: they use it as a way to ignore non-important emails entirely. That doesn't reduce the quantity of emails that bombard you. Nor does it help you answer them faster.

The *Boomerang* app, for Gmail and Outlook, lets you fling emails away, then have them redelivered later. This doesn't reduce the quantity of emails that bombard you. Nor does it help you answer them faster.

Fooling yourself with pause buttons, boomerangs and the like… well, that's another way of dealing with the overload.

But when it comes to the process-based communications in day-to-day business, pause, prioritize or boomerang at your peril…

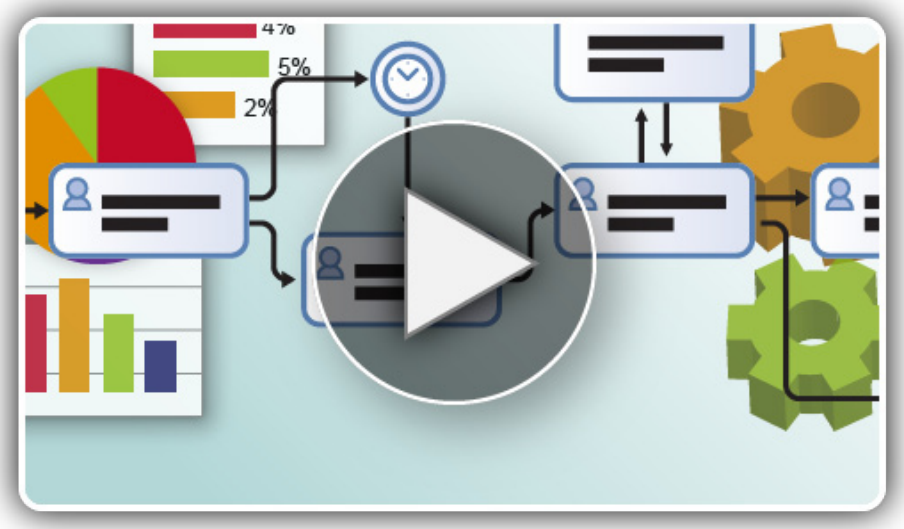
So let's look at process-linked messaging and how to remove it from your email.

*"Forty years after Alvin Toffler popularized the term **information overload**, we might as well admit this: our efforts to fight it have failed."*

Oliver Burkeman,
columnist for the Guardian Newspaper

BUSINESS PROCESS MANAGEMENT MEANS TARGETED, COLLABORATIVE COMMUNICATION

Business Process Management software models a process or workflow, connects it to other systems, and runs it using a web based platform. So the people involved in that process can do their part. The software manages the forward progress of the process, step by step.



At each step of this process, someone has an action to take, or the software accepts, saves, or sends data.

As each step is completed, BPM software moves to the next step.

And in a well-designed, well-structured process, all this process-linked communication takes place in this collaborative space – not in people's email boxes.

Requesting Paid Time Off

Asking for vacation time, or paid time off, is a business process. Remember Jack and the email blitz? A request for PTO is a relatively simple process; Jack submits a request, his manager approves it, rejects it, or asks for a change. When the request is approved, specific people and systems in the company need to be notified. The communication in this process can take place between Jack and his manager, Human Resources, Accounting/payroll, other team members who may be called on to fill for Jack while he is away…and since it is all concerning Jack's request for time off, it's all directly associated with this process.

STRUCTURED BPM PROCESSES KEEP EMAIL OUT OF THE INBOX

From beginning to end, communication goes back and forth via specific forms, and process attachments, instead of by email Q&A.

All necessary steps are defined in advance so no step is missed.

The requestor and the approver do what they need to do in the right order and they have access to all information and forms needed.

Exceptions and special cases can still be handled as they arise - still within the process.

Automation helps

Buttons, checkboxes, and other pre-determined choices in BPM process-based forms can trigger automated responses and actions.

+ "check availability of dates" can check to see who else has requested the same time off.

+ "approve" can send off a confirmation, and post employee's "off" dates to a calendar.

+ "delegate activity" can determine a vacationing employee's replacement according to the rules the manager has defined.

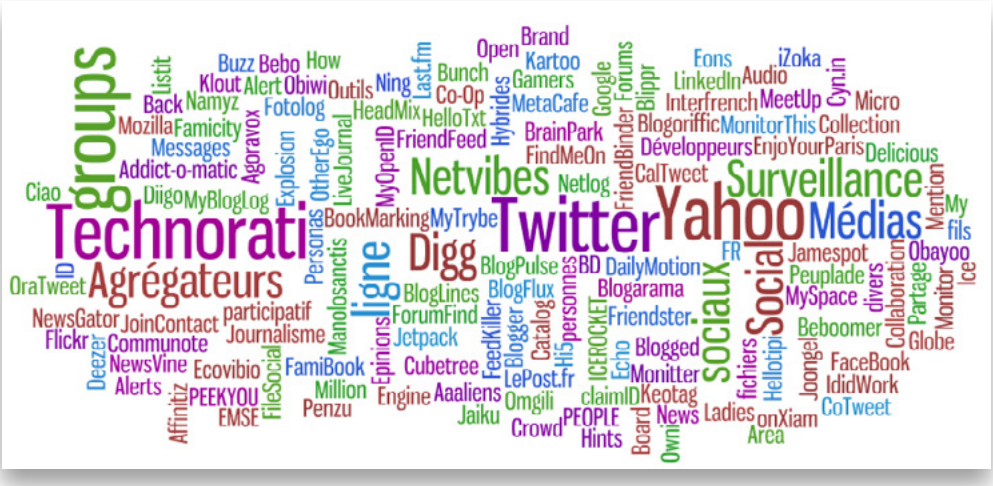
This eliminates more tedious back-and-forth communication from the email box.

See More

Rise Up, Intrepid Office Hero! Seek Your Own Shangri-La!

“COLLABORATIVE SPACES” INCLUDE SOCIAL MEDIA

In the personal space, we’re using social media more and more…



Social media is

+ web -and mobile- based technologies which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among organizations, communities, and individuals

+ social software which facilitates human communication

Facebook usage is up

40%

since last year

Twitter is adding

300,000

users a day

1 in 5

Americans age 18-35 use @twitter

96%

of 18-35 year olds are on a social network

50%

of YouTube’s 300 millions users visit at least once a week

BUSINESS "COLLABORATIVE SPACES" ALSO INCLUDE SOCIAL MEDIA

In the business space, we're using social media more and more too

Companies are already using social media for:

+ Community/team building
+ Collaboration
+ Health and wellness
+ Adapting to organizational change
+ Line of sight to the business
+ Engaging workforce in real time
+ Promoting risk taking

"Business" social media are similar to Facebook and Twitter, but specifically designed for company collaboration.

"Social BPM should not just mean adding another social platform – BPM should leverage existing ones. Connecting processes to Salesforce Chatter, or Google calendar, for example, allows the end users of applications to integrate their growing use of social media platforms for communication."

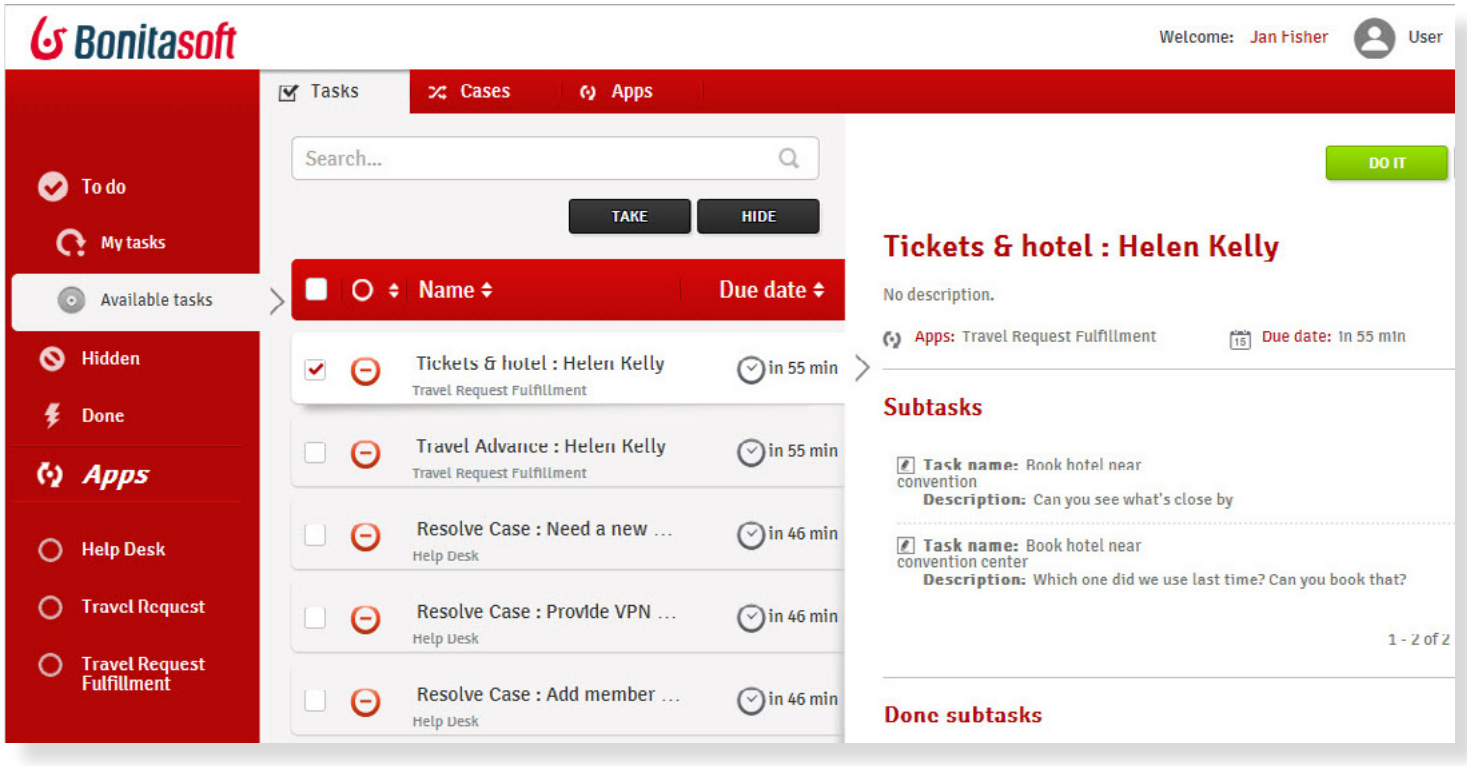
Miguel Valdes Faura,
BonitaSoft CEO

HOW CAN SOCIAL MEDIA BE *LESS* TIME WASTING THAN EMAIL?

Unlike email, which lists messages chronologically and mixes subjects and projects, **a social message stream can be tied to a specific project** or set of projects.

No one gets missed because of an incomplete "cc" list. Information can be added to the message stream and accessed by all.

No one gets spammed with "cc's". Alerts notify "subscribers" only when there is new information.



A *STRUCTURED STRATEGY* IS KEY FOR SUCCESSFUL CORPORATE SOCIAL MEDIA

If "social messaging" is unattached to a specific project or subject, it can still be hard to find information.

Some 20% of companies have tried social networking, but most don't use it well.

"social media" + structured BPM process = targeted communication

+ Social BPM adds social components such as wikis and social networking to more traditional components in BPM initiatives.

+ Use of social BPM allows for more direct user interaction with a process/project.

+ Comment streams or threads in a process case allow end users involved in the process to add relevant information – those streams are then available to everyone involved.

Klick now uses email only to communicate with external clients, while internally all messages go through a workflow system.

"When we started this, we never thought it could completely replace email," says Leerom Segal, president and chief executive of Klick.

"We thought it would be used for specific tasks requiring a response. But before you know it, it was being used for every task."

"Often services get thrown up across a company without any real strategy. People stop using them if they feel overloaded."

Charlene Li,
Altimeter Group
a social-media consultancy

USE OF BPM IS RISING RAPIDLY

Mega-vendors like Oracle and IBM are putting more effort into their BPM offerings. Smaller vendors like BonitaSoft, Intalio and BizAgi are offering BPM suites that are being adopted by businesses and departments that can't afford the cost of or technological commitment to the mega-vendors.

What BPMS fits you best?

Bonita Open Solution
Integrated social tools

Bonita BPM Connectors
allow comment streams to be externalized – connect a BPM process to your wiki or Chatter, or Yammer or Twitter, or whatever!

See More

Process Efficiency To The Rescue!

THE [nearly] ULTIMATE GUIDE RECOMMENDS…

Put a BPMS in place

- Sample RFP
- What to Ask During a BPMS Demo
- What to Ask a BPMS Vendor's Customer References

Use structured BPM processes

- Build a Process from Scratch with Bonita

Add BPM-based automation tools

- Understanding Process Automation
- BPM Made Easy

Build "social media" into BPM processes

- When BPM goes social
- Connecting BPM to Social

… and keep the flood of communication out of those email boxes!

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SOURCES

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