



TEXT SUPPORT

Carolyn Weaver is the producer and host of Tech Books, in its third season on Tech TV, Book Television, Court TV, MSNBC Canada and Rogers Television. carolyn@fineprintonline.com



Under Review

Managing Your Email,
Thinking Outside the Box

By Christina Cavanagh

RATING: ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

In your latest study you have found that for most people the amount of time it takes to reply to e-mails has gone down and yet the amount of time it takes to get through the inbox has increased. Is this extra hour a day at the expense of the individual, the corporation or both? Both. The individual is working an hour a day longer on e-mails and this is often done from home or on the weekend when people log in on their own time. The corporation though is also losing productivity as people usually knock off the less important e-mails first and often leave important ones to come back to later.

More people are becoming increasingly efficient with their inboxes in terms of making decisions to reply, delete or file faster. Are corporations doing enough to control

e-mail and is it in their economic interest to do so?

It is in the economic interest of the corporation to control e-mail because the loss of productivity is a cost drain. They realize this, but perhaps not as clearly as they could if they broke the numbers out. In England a company with 25,000 employees, made news when it asked them not to e-mail each other and found that it saved three hours a day in employee time, which translated to \$1.6 million a month. This is not practical for many corporations, but we are seeing them looking for answers. Some are considering e-mail free Fridays or e-mail free hours in the morning when employees can attend to the work of greatest priority.

One of the most common complaints about e-mail is in reference to the fact that some e-mails should be a face-to-face conversation. Why is this?

This is in part because it is becoming more common. These sorts of messages are seen as inefficient, unnecessary

FAST

4

Favourite author
Reginald Hill

Favourite Web site
Amazon.com

A good book...
Touches you on both an intellectual and spiritual level.

Guilty pleasure
Drinking more Veuve Clicquot than I should!

and over-taxing the use of electronic messaging. One respondent in a recent survey said, "It's not the length of the e-mail, but the weight of the message that should determine delivery." Some people take offence if they feel that e-mail is being used to dodge a direct conversation.

Why are people choosing e-mail now over direct conversations in person or on the phone? I think perhaps people don't

know better. E-mail came on stream and it was plug and play and we were never trained on it. There are a lot of people who don't understand that e-mail is interruptive and requires feedback. But the fact is e-mail is here to stay and what I am trying to point out in the book is that content should drive what channel we choose. We need to stop and think before pushing buttons such as "reply to all" or ccing numerous people that might not need to have their day interrupted with the contents of the e-mail.

The number one reason people are now stating that they like e-mail is because of the paper trail. What does this tell us about corporate culture?

This was a scary finding. In past it was in the top list of e-mail benefits but now it has become the top benefit to many people. There is a distrust that is fueling it. People are feeling they don't trust conversations any more because there is no paper record. The problem is people aren't considering the

productivity of this approach. Definitely a paper trail is good if your instinct tells you there might be a problem. But to use it carte blanche is, again, not respecting corporate productivity issues.

How seriously are individuals and corporations taking the legal aspect of e-mail?

For the majority it is a slow moving realization. Most people still fall into ideology of, "I'm at my computer and it doesn't matter what content I generate." Most people believe it won't happen to them.

The recent CIBC issues related to the use of BlackBerry devices, though, is beginning to drive home the point for most people that putting it in writing is not like having a conversation.

To record a conversation you need legal authorization for a wire tap whereas the minute you send an e-mail, it is part of the public domain. This means it can be traced and used in ways the sender did not consider at the time he or she pushed the send button.



INSIDER

So hungry you could eat the menu?

THERE'S THIS TV SHOW WITH A CHEF WHO DRIVES around America in a giant toaster. It's called The Surreal Chef. His forte is dishes that aren't quite what they seem — ice cream dishes that look like fried eggs, salmon poached in a dishwasher, that sort of thing. But as foodies go, Homaru Cantu is using technology to take messing with your head to the next level, says the *New York Post*.

The Chicago chef uses an inkjet printer — a Canon, if you need to know — to print images of food with organic inks on edible paper made of corn starch and the ubiquitous soybean.

He then rubs spices and flavourings on the back to produce the appropriate taste.

"We can create any sort of flavour on a printed image that we set our minds to," the seriously out-there chef tells the *Post*. "What does M. C. Escher's 'Relativity' painting taste like? That's where we go next."

(Note to self: When in Chicago, sample the Escher, but avoid Munsch's "Scream" like the plague. I already know what angst tastes like.)

Food critics are comparing him to Salvador Dali. Patrons shell out \$240 a head for a 20-course tasting. Somebody's crazy here, and I don't think it's Cantu. He's as sly as a picture of a fox.

As chefs using technology go, though, no one can supplant in my affections the Swedish Chef of Muppet Show fame. There are dozens of sites featuring the Encheferizer, an applet that translates English into Swedish Chef. Du a qooeek Google-a oon zee vurd incheffereezzer und yuoo'll see-a vhet I meun. Bork Bork Bork!

DON'T CRY FOR HER, FIORINA

FORMER HP CZARINA CARLY FIORINA, DEPOSED IN A bloodless coup in February, will be weeping all the way to the bank. And she'll have to make several trips to carry the wheelbarrows full of cash the company gave her to not darken the door anymore.

Reuters reported that Fiorina's parting package amounts to \$45 million — in U.S. dollars, not



Canadian pesos. This includes US\$21.4 million in cash and US\$23.5 million in stock options. This makes up in part for the tragic erosion of the value of the stock options she received upon joining HP in 1999, which fell from about \$65 million to a piddly \$18 million with Fiorina at the helm.

And herein lies the irony: If Fiorina hangs onto those stock options and new leadership reverses the downward trajectory of HP shares, her package will be worth even more.

PSST! Got an inside scoop? Email us at insider@itbusiness.ca