

ARMY OPERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

MANAGING EMAIL

Email is a ubiquitous tool that has transformed the way we work. It is versatile, portable, fast, and easy to use. It is the primary way most commanders and Soldiers share information. But, according to a study done in 2010, nearly 57 percent of email users say they are overwhelmed by the volume of email they receive. Fortunately, a few simple rules can prevent you and your organization from wasting significant time and effort clearing your inboxes.

- Keep emails short, readable within a minute. If your message is more complicated, summarize it in 5-7 lines in the email and provide a link to a larger document. Make sure you provide the Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) so the reader can immediately answer the question "What am I supposed to do with this email?"
- Keep each email to a single topic. Start another email with an appropriate subject line if you need to address another topic.
- Do not change topics in replies. Create a new email message instead.
- Establish organization rules for using CC, BCC, etc (see sidebar)
- Create subject lines that clearly identify actions required and any deadlines associated with them.
- Avoid using "reply all" unless there is a compelling need for it.
- Don't reply with "thanks for sending" messages. The sender can set up read receipts if it is important to know you received the message.
- Include a signature block on all messages that contains your phone number and email address. This allows people to respond to you even if they only have the last piece of an email thread available.
- Do not send attachments. Send links to shared spaces and files. This will help avoid the dreaded "your mailbox is full" message.
- Set aside specific times to read and respond to email each day. Turn off Outlook notifications so you are not distracted by incoming messages outside of those times.
- Process each email one at a time to completion. All messages can be dealt with in one of four ways:
 - Delete--Some emails don't apply to you or may just need to be scanned and thrown away.
 - Do--These tasks can be accomplished in 2 minutes or less.
 - Delegate--Forward the message to the appropriate doer.
 - Defer--Create a task or calendar item for this message so you can focus your effort on it at a later time. Then, return to clearing your inbox.
- Learn the tool. Take an Outlook course or look for training online. Outlook has a lot of features to automate tasks and make handling your messages easier.

Defining the Terms

To: I want you to do something with this email

Cc: I want to keep you in the loop and do not expect you to do anything in response to this email

Bcc: I want you to know and I DO NOT want the others to know that I want you to know. Handle Bcc: with extreme care! Moreover, NEVER reply unless you see your name on the "To" or "Cc" lines.

Forward: I want you to know and I may want to add something to the original message.

To learn more about Army Knowledge Management, visit the AOKM AKO portal:

<https://www.us.army.mil/suite/page/645010>