

THE TWO-INBOX E-MAIL STRATEGY

Have you ever missed an important e-mail because your inbox was so stuffed with newsletters, advertisements, and fundraising appeals?

Me too.

But since I went to a two-inbox strategy I hardly ever miss an important message. Here's how I tamed my e-mail tiger:

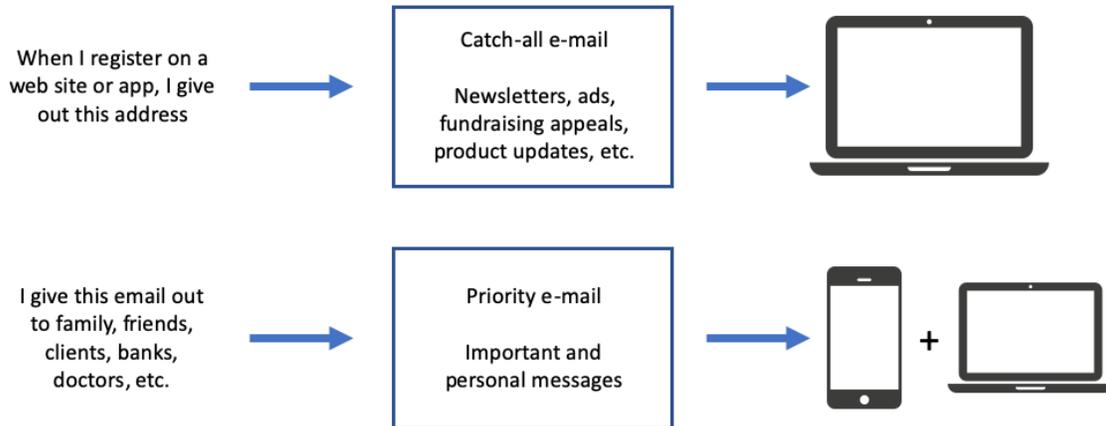
FIRST, SIGN UP FOR ANOTHER EMAIL ACCOUNT, OR START USING ONE OF YOUR DORMANT ONES.

Tech companies such as Google (Gmail) Microsoft (Outlook) and Apple (iCloud) give out free email accounts. Sign up for one. Or, if you have one of their products or have used their services, you probably already have an unused account with them. Pick one and make it your new PRIORITY e-mail address.

Pro tip: Go with a different company for your second e-mail address.

For example, if your main e-mail is a Gmail address, set up a second email with Yahoo!, Outlook or iCloud. Having accounts at two different providers saves confusion and can keep you from having to log into and out of a browser to check your mail or change account settings.

SECOND, MAKE THE SWITCH:



1. **Designate your old email box as your “catch-all.”** Your currently cluttered inbox will continue to fill up with newsletters and ads. You should continue to give out this address whenever you subscribe to a mailing list or buy something on the web or in an app. When these vendors start sending you promotional emails, they go to your catch-all box. Check this once or twice a day.
2. **Designate your new email box as “priority.”** Go through your old inbox and send a message to friends, family members and business associates whose messages need to get through right away. Tell them you are changing addresses. You’ll probably also want to switch over your banking, credit card and medical contacts to the priority address so you won’t miss an important message.
3. **Go to your phone and activate notifications for your priority e-mails only.** Yipee! That little red message counter on your phone app only appears when a priority message comes in. All other messages accumulate quietly in your catch-all box until you’re ready to read them.

Within a day or two, all your priority correspondence will be showing up in its own inbox. You’ll stop missing important messages. And your stress level will plummet as your attention will no longer drawn to every message that comes your way.

THIRD, PRUNE YOUR CATCH-ALL INBOX.

OR NOT.

After I launched my priority mailbox, I pretty much ignored my poor old catch-all mailbox, which kept filling up at a rate of about 4,000 messages a month. I thought about closing it down, but I did occasionally get an important email from someone who had not yet switched over. Plus, there was still some good content coming into that box. So, one rainy afternoon I decided to turn that dumpster into a working inbox as well. This took me about 4 hours, plus another month of vigilant unsubscribing. Here's how I did it:

1. I went through my Yahoo! inbox and began unsubscribing to all the content I was no longer interested in. Emailers are legally required to put unsubscribe links in their publications, but these are often in tiny print near the bottom of the email. (Some email clients such as Apple's Mail make unsubscribing easy – just click on the unsubscribe link that appears above the message header, and Mail does the rest for you.)
2. After each unsubscribe, I deleted all previous emails from that particular sender. For example, after I unsubscribed from the Mountain Biker's Newsletter, I searched for the term "Mountain Biker", highlighted those emails (I had over 300) and deleted them with a single click.
3. Over the next few weeks emails continued to come in from sources I was no longer interested in. I immediately took a moment to unsubscribe.
4. I could have just left the inbox as it was, but I sure enjoy having less junk mail.

FOURTH: ENJOY E-MAIL NIRVANA

After about a month of diligent daily pruning I had two functional inboxes: one with priority messages from individuals and organizations with whom I had personal contact, and a nicely thinned catch-all inbox with newsletters and notifications from organizations of interest to me.

Now that little red dot no longer says 50,000 – it typically says 30. I'm able to work through both inboxes in less than 15 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the afternoon. And to keep my inboxes healthy I keep up with my unsubscribes.

Pro tip: If you read mail on your computer, go to your e-mail client such as Outlook or Apple Mail and sign into your new inbox. Voila! All your emails will appear on one screen, but in separate inboxes. Or, if you use email on your mobile device, download the appropriate app and log in.