Randy Dean's Top Ten E-mail Timesavers/Productivity Enhancers

As a time management, productivity, and e-mail efficiency expert, I'm always looking for ways to find a few seconds here and there in things I'm already doing anyway, and e-mail is something I'm doing every day! There are a number of "handy strategies" when it comes to managing your e-mail, and using these tips can make a massive difference in your productivity AND your sanity. Here are my 10 Favorite Quick Outlook E-mail Timesavers from my book, *Taming the E-mail Beast.*

1. **Drag & Drop to create new Task** – Simply "left-click" on an e-mail, hold the click, drag the e-mail to the "Task" icon in Outlook, and drop. New task is created – then change subject line, set due date, etc.
2. **Using a "Reminder" from the created Task to confirm timely completion** – Don't want to miss the task you just created? Turn on the "Reminder" check box and set the date and time for a reminder to "pop up" for that task.
3. **Drag & Drop to create new Calendar Item** – You can follow the same process as in number one to create a new Calendar item also – "left-click" the e-mail, drag it to "Calendar" and drop. Then set date, location, etc.
4. **Drag & Drop to create new Contact** – And, you can also "left-click", drag, and drop an e-mail onto Contacts to auto-create a new contact. Then, if the e-mail has a "signature" at the bottom, you can copy and paste additional information from the signature (address, phone, fax, etc.) to complete the contact.
5. **Using Signatures to create "auto-emails"** – Rather than just having a single signature that automatically adds on to every message you send or reply to, why not make multiple signatures that you can access for specific content and questions/answers you find yourself frequently sending?
6. **Creating a smart file infrastructure to clean out your inbox** – It is easy to create new folders to file your messages – simply "right-click" on the folder you want to drop a new folder into, and then select "New Folder" and give it a name. You can also move folders and rename folders at will – have fun!
7. **Using a "Rule" to notify of important messages received** – Some senders are more important than others – "right click" on the name or subject line of an e-mail from an important sender, and select "Create Rule" – from this window, you can set a specific sound for the sender to get special notification.
8. **Using a "Rule" to auto-file certain kinds of received messages** – You can use the same method above to also "auto-file" certain messages. For example, you can create a rule to bypass your inbox and auto-file the e-newsletter from your professional association into the affiliated "e-newsletter" folder. (Right-click on message, select "Create Rule", Advanced Options, "From sender", "Move into Folder")
9. **Using a "Rule" to end the receipt of multiple-time spammers** – Have a "spammer" that keeps sending you e-mails you do not want or need? Simply use the "rule" tool to set a message to be "permanently deleted" if it comes from that same e-mail address in the future using the same method.
10. **Using "Shift-Delete" to get rid of unwanted e-mails in one quick step** – And, if a spammer is getting around your rules and your company's spam filter, don't worry. Single left-click on the message, hold down the "shift" key, and hit delete. That is a "permanent delete", and the message is not just deleted from your inbox, it also bypasses your "deleted items" folder – IT IS GONE!

With these ten tips, hopefully you will find your Outlook inbox cleaner and more prioritized. Happy E-mailing!

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To learn more about what Randy can do for you and your organization, visit his web site: http://www.randalldean.com

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Related to my *Top Ten Outlook E-mail Timesavers*, I have also compiled a list of my ten favorite Outlook tips in the "other four funtions" – calendar, contacts, tasks, & notes. These tips will help you turn your Outlook into your key daily "decision-maker", and help you better manage your time, tasks, projects, and people:

1. **Turn your e-mails into Tasks!** – Outlook has an outstanding task list. You can easily turn your e-mails into tasks through "drag & drop", and then manage your tasks on one of the excellent task management screens. I prefer the "Active" tasks view to see current active tasks across all of my projects. In Outlook 2010, I also really like the "Today" view – that just shows me tasks with today's due date. I also frequently use the "Category" view when wanting to work in specific projects or manage people, and the "Completed" items view is great for referencing when things actually "got done"!

2. **You can also use Tasks to track delegations and deliverables** – If someone owes me something, I track that in my task list, with what they owe me as the subject line, the due date they owe it to me, and, if necessary, the *date I need to bug them* so they get me my stuff on time. You can even "Assign Tasks", turning tasks back into e-mails that will go to the "taskee" and become part of their task list – awesome!

3. **Use Recurring TASKS** – Most people know you can turn on recurrences and reminders for your calendar events, but fewer know you can do this also for specific tasks. Do you have any tasks that happen weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually? You can set them up as recurring tasks in your task list, and stop having to memorize them. You can even turn on reminders so they pop up on your screen!

4. **Know Your Calendar Views and Options** – Most people know about the daily, weekly, and monthly views of the Outlook calendar. Less know about the capability to show specific days through the use of the Shift and CTRL keys. With the Shift Key, you can click one date on your calendar, hold down the Shift key, and then select an earlier or later date, and you will see all of those (and ONLY those) contiguous dates on your screen. With the CTRL key, you can pick non-contiguous dates to see on your screen. And you can right-click over the side time margin to change the view settings from hour to 30-minutes to 15 minutes, etc. This can help you with seeing more or less detail as you need it.

5. **Use Calendar Recurrences and Alarms** – Every day, I recommend you look ahead a week or two at your calendar and optimize it – look for events you need to add, turn on recurrences, reminders and alarms, add items to your task list per your calendar events. Be proactive – not reactive – with your time!

6. **Block Calendar Times for Key Projects/Assignments** – Do you have a project that is not moving as fast as you would like? Every day, when you are looking ahead, try to also do some "strategic time blocking" – block time for that one key work or personal project that isn't moving as fast as you would like. Time blocking for specific project work and accomplishment is a smart strategy for success!

7. **Track More Than Just "The Standards" in Your Contact List** – Name, Address, Phone, Fax, E-mail -- Of course you'll save that info! How about spouse names, kids names, directions to their location, details on previous contacts with the person (including how you contacted them, what was discussed, etc.?) This will make your contact list truly useful. Consider connecting on social media too!

8. **Use the "Activities" Button in Contacts for Contact-Specific Searches** – One of the coolest tools inside of Contacts is the "Activities" button – click on this and see all e-mails sent to this contact, all e-mails received from this contact, and any meetings/events they were included on!

9. **Track Your Ideas and Lists in Your Notes** – Have a good idea? How about a project/priority list? Bucket List? Stuff you need at the grocery store, home supply store, office supply store, book store, music store? 800-numbers for hotels, car rental companies, and airlines? Packing lists for trips (business and personal)? Favorite restaurants? Lawn and home maintenance? Use Notes and free your mind! (Consider Evernote on your smart phone/tablet for personal notes/info.)

10. **Look at your Calendar and Task lists BEFORE checking E-mail!** PLEASE, please please!! Look at your calendar, projects, and task list BEFORE looking at your e-mail at the start of each day. That will allow you to see the bigger picture and be more strategic before "fighting all the fires". This one tip could lead to much higher productivity and personal/professional sanity. Get above your e-mail!

With these ten tips, hopefully you can get much more productivity and usage from your MS Outlook. Combine this with smart e-mail strategies, and it can become the "centerpiece" of a smart personal and professional productivity system. Have at it, and have fun using it!

Randy Dean, MBA, is the "Totally Obsessed" Time & Technology Guy. Learn more at www.randalldean.com.