

Five Quick Tips for Better Staff/Team Meetings

By Randy Dean, MBA

As I travel across the United States and abroad leading programs on better time management and personal productivity, I continue hearing that one of the most frequently mentioned areas of aggravation and lost time is poorly run staff and team meetings. Many professionals report the loss of significant time in meetings that seem to provide little business value, eat up important staff resources, and negatively affect morale and performance. This is obviously unfortunate, because when planned and managed properly, meetings have the capability of being one of the most powerful business-building and staff enhancement tools in our arsenal as managers. They truly can and should be a springboard for organizational success.

Seeing both good and bad behaviors on the part of managers and companies related to meeting management, I have compiled a few suggestions on how to help guarantee more consistent meeting success:

1. **Get Clear on Meeting Purpose and Expected Outcomes Before Calling a Meeting.** This seems like a “no brainer”, but I am always surprised by how often managers and leaders seem willing to call a meeting (and thus risk wasting staff time and resources) without thinking through the rationale and purpose for a meeting. I recommend to my clients to always get very clear on purpose and expected outcomes before ever announcing a meeting. A simple test is whether you can succinctly state the purpose and desired outcomes in two sentences or less. If you can clearly and succinctly state the purpose, and there seems to be a valid business reason for the meeting, then you can move forward to step two.
2. **Always Build an Agenda in Advance of the Meeting.** Equally surprising is how often managers will gather a group of people together without having a working agenda in advance of the meeting. This is a definite recipe for failure, as it indicates that the meeting leader has not adequately prepared for a successful meeting experience. “Just winging it” should never be acceptable in a professional business environment, especially when valuable staff resources and time have the potential to be wasted.

I follow a very simple rule whenever I am asked to attend a meeting. Before ever accepting the invitation, I always ask to see a draft agenda. If the meeting leader cannot or will not produce an agenda, I respectfully decline their request. The simple act of requiring an agenda before a meeting holds the person calling the meeting accountable for taking the time to properly plan for a successful meeting experience. (Of course, if you are asked to attend well in advance of a meeting, it may be a bit unreasonable to expect a fully fleshed out agenda, but you should still be able to get a very clear understanding of the purpose and outcomes of the meeting. Let the meeting leader know that you expect to see the agenda 1-2 days in advance if you agree to attend based on the purpose and desired outcomes.)

3. **Distribute the Agenda Early and Communicate Expectations.** Another key meeting success tactic is providing an agenda well in advance of a meeting. This will help attendees see and anticipate their areas of participation. The very best agendas even identify who will be expected to speak on what topics, thus helping attendees be even more prepared for their participation. The best meeting leaders I have worked with have even taken the time to talk in advance to the individuals expected to lead or contribute to specific discussion points in the meeting, so that those people can come fully prepared for the discussion, and so they have adequate time to gather and bring any relevant or needed additional information.
4. **Set Defined Start and End Times for the Meeting, and Stick to Them!** One tip I always try to follow is to never start a meeting on the hour or half hour – many people assume these meetings will actually start 5-10 minutes late, and then they decide to be late themselves. I like to pick some odd minute for a meeting start time – say 10:07 a.m. – the novelty of the time actually will get people to show up on time. (And when they do show up on time at 10:07 a.m., start the meeting!) I also like to very clearly communicate the desired end time of the meeting, and do everything within my power to end that meeting at the promised time. This helps to build trust, and interestingly, when you end a meeting on time, recent research indicates that attendees will report higher satisfaction with that meeting, even if the desired outcomes are not accomplished, simply because you ended the meeting on time!
5. **One Final Suggestion – Always Have Assignments and Deliverables.** If you attend a meeting and don't walk out the door with an assignment and due date, you should rightfully ask why you attended the meeting in the first place. Meetings are a place where work should first be discussed, then decided, and then distributed! Make sure everyone in the room stays engaged by having them leave with a related task to help keep the purpose of the meeting moving forward.

Obviously, these are but a few of the strategies that can help you to lead better and more valuable meetings. With these few basic strategies working for you, you should see a tangible improvement in your meeting success, as well as greater preparation, participation, and enthusiasm from those leading and attending your meetings.

Post Script: *Are you simply having too many meetings?* One major association client of mine realized they were having so many meetings that people never had time to get any work done. The CEO came up with a great solution – no meetings were allowed on Wednesday afternoons – that was sacred, uninterrupted “get work done” time in the office for the entire professional staff. An interesting and somewhat funny thing happened – Wednesday became the highest attendance day of the week! People avoided taking sick or personal time as they knew that was the day they could get work done! Something to consider if you have too many meetings in your workplace environment. ;-)

Randy Dean, MBA, The E-mail Sanity Expert™ has been one of the most popular expert speakers on the conference, corporate, and university training and speaking circuit for several years. The author of the recent Amazon e-mail bestseller, *Taming the E-mail Beast*, Randy is a very popular and engaging time, e-mail, and technology management speaker and trainer. He brings 20+ years of speaking and training experience to his programs, and has been very popular with programs including *Taming the E-mail Beast*, *Finding an Extra Hour Every Day*, *Optimizing Your Outlook*, *Time Management in "The Cloud" Using Google and Other Online Apps*, and *Smart Phone Success & Terrific Tablets*. Learn more, including about information on his new streaming, self-study program options, at <http://www.randalldean.com>.

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NOTE: You can subscribe to Randy's monthly **Timely Tips** e-newsletter – where he features one time-saving tip and one smart phone/tablet featured app each month – by simply sending him an e-mail at randy@randalldean.com and putting “Timely Tips please” in the subject line.

You may also want to check out or even subscribe to **Randy's YouTube Channel** at <http://www.youtube.com/user/JanaRandyDean> where he often posts some of his favorite technology tips, snippets from program sessions, info about popular programs, and more.

You can join Randy on LinkedIn at <http://www.linkedin.com/in/randydean>

You can follow Randy on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/timelyman>

Like Randy's *Taming E-mail* Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/tamingemailbeast/>

Curricular Practical Training (CPT) Checklist

☐ CPT is work authorization for any semester academic internship, summer academic internship, or clinical internship for credit. CPT is available to international students studying in the US on an F-1 Visa.

☐ Must have a letter of employment to apply for CPT. The letter must contain the:

- Job title
- Exact start and end dates of employment
- Hours worked per week
- Place of employment
- A brief description of job duties
- The position may be paid or unpaid

☐ Apply by filling out the Curricular Practical Training eform in [iStart](#).

☐ Enroll in the corresponding course to obtain necessary credit for CPT authorization.

☐ If you plan to apply for CPT for a summer academic internship you must still enroll in the course. The course will result in an added tuition charge on your student account.

☐ Reach out to the Dickinson Law Office of the Registrar or Internship Director Professor Alison Lintal for more information.

☐ Your request for CPT authorization will be forwarded to the faculty contact for CPT, Professor Alison Lintal. You will be notified if you are approved for CPT and sent a new I-20 via email.

☐ CPT may be applied to a part time or a full time job. More than 20 hours per week is considered full time. CPT authorization may be for up to one year.

☐ You must obtain a United States Social Security Number (SSN) if the job is a paid position. The [process of obtaining a SSN](#) requires an in-person consultation.

☐ Failure to comply with terms set forth by USCIS may jeopardize the status of your visa in the future.

EMPLOYER OFFER LETTER

To:

International Students and Scholars Center (ISSC)
Arizona State University
PO BOX 872812
1151 S. Forest Ave
Tempe, AZ 85287

RE: Internship Offer details for: _____
Student's Last Name Student's First Name

Employer's name: _____
(As it appears on I-9)

Company address*: _____

☐ Work will be performed virtually at a remote location

Job title: _____

Specific job duties:

Exact dates (beginning and ending) of the training period: _____
(from MM/DD/YYYY to MM/DD/YYYY)

Number of hours to be worked per week: _____

Statement: The Company is aware that the work will be training performed in satisfaction of degree requirements for the student's academic program at Arizona State University and that the proposed period of training fulfills the student's academic training requirement and that the training period will not be extended.

Official company representative name (please print): _____

Official company representative signature: _____ Date: _____
(Wet ink signature or official e-signature) (MM/DD/YYYY)

*If the internship is performed at a third-party location, please provide the company's name and physical address.

Name of third-party company: _____

Physical Address: _____

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Checklist

- ☐ Apply up to 90 days before you graduate. Confer with the Office of the Registrar regarding the date of degree conferral.
- ☐ Apply no later than 60 days after graduation. The process takes several weeks so apply as soon as possible.
- ☐ You do not need a job offer to apply for OPT.
- ☐ Apply at [istart](#).
- ☐ The faculty advisor contact for OPT approval is Professor Emily Morris, who serves as Director of International and Non-JD Programs at Penn State Dickinson Law.
- ☐ Once you are approved by Penn State you have 30 days to complete & submit your application to [USCIS](#).
- ☐ There is a fee to submit your OPT application to USCIS.
- ☐ OPT employment must be directly related to your [field of study](#).
- ☐ OPT work authorization is valid for one year. You may choose when your OPT begins, but it must be within 60 days of degree conferral.
- ☐ If you apply for OPT without a job offer and are later extended an offer you must update your application to include the job information.
- ☐ You must be employed within 90 days of the start date of your OPT authorization.
- ☐ Failure to comply with OPT program requirements may result in a loss of [work authorization](#) and is a [deportable offense](#).

Post-completion OPT document checklist



Place this on top of your entire packet

Date: _____

To: USCIS Lockbox Location

Family Name: _____

Given Name: _____

SEVIS Number: _____

Requested: F-1 Permission for Post-Completion OPT (c) (3) (B)

Document checklist of items included in this application

- ☐ Post-Completion OPT Document Checklist
- ☐ Your payment of \$410 by **one** of the following methods:
 - G-1450 form if you will be paying by credit card, **or**
 - a check, cashiers check or money order made payable to "U.S. Department of Homeland Security"
- ☐ G-1145 form
- ☐ Original I-765 form
- ☐ Photocopy of OPT SEVIS I-20, single sided copies (signed by DSO and student)
- ☐ Copy of paper I-94 or electronic record retrieved from i94.cbp.dhs.gov
- ☐ Photocopy of front and back of prior EAD cards (if applicable)
- ☐ Photocopy of prior CPT I-20s (if applicable)
- ☐ Photocopy of passport biographical pages (name/photo/expiration)
- ☐ Two passport style photos (2" x 2")

Completed application must be received by USCIS:

- No later than 60 days after your reported program completion date on your I-20
- No later than 30 days after ISSC signature date on Post-OPT I-20

Failure to meet both requirements may result in USCIS denial of your application.

Randy Dean, MBA

The E-mail Sanity Expert ®

<http://www.randalldean.com>

Everything E-mail!



I thought you might find this compilation of my PDF tip sheets and videos very useful for all of your e-mail activities. They cover e-mail processing/efficiency and several e-mail etiquette/composition issues. Enjoy!

Quick Tips for Outlook & E-mail Excellence (Including YouTube Video Tips):

[http://www.randalldean.com/Randy Dean Quick Tips for Outlook Excellence.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/Randy_Dean_Quick_Tips_for_Outlook_Excellence.pdf)

Quick Tips for Gmail & Google Users (Including YouTube Video Tips):

[http://www.randalldean.com/Randy Dean Quick Tips for Gmail Google.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/Randy_Dean_Quick_Tips_for_Gmail_Google.pdf)

The Three Key Ways You Abuse Your E-mail Inbox:

[http://www.randalldean.com/3 Ways You Abuse Your Inbox.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/3_Ways_You_Abuse_Your_Inbox.pdf)

How I Start My Day (My Daily/Weekly Routine):

[http://www.randalldean.com/How I Start My Day Daily-Weekly Routine Article.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/How_I_Start_My_Day_Daily-Weekly_Routine_Article.pdf)

My Top Ten E-mail Timesavers: [http://www.randalldean.com/Top Ten Email Timesavers.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/Top_Ten_Email_Timesavers.pdf)

My "Efficient" Inbox Cleanup Process: [http://www.randalldean.com/Efficient Inbox Cleanup Process.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/Efficient_Inbox_Cleanup_Process.pdf)

Better E-mail Subject Lines Article: [http://www.randalldean.com/E-mail Subject Lines Bonus Article.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/E-mail_Subject_Lines_Bonus_Article.pdf)

Writing "Saner" E-mails Article: [http://www.randalldean.com/Sane Written E-mails Article.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/Sane_Written_E-mails_Article.pdf)

"Who Owns a Sent E-mail? Article: [www.randalldean.com/Who Owns a Sent E-mail.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/Who_Owns_a_Sent_E-mail.pdf)

How to Receive Fewer E-mails: [http://www.randalldean.com/Ten Tips for Fewer Emails.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/Ten_Tips_for_Fewer_Emails.pdf)

Handling CC's, Replies, Forwards, FYI's and "Reply All's":

[www.randalldean.com/CC Forward Reply FYI Article.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/CC_Forward_Reply_FYI_Article.pdf)

Top Ten Outlook E-mail Tips: [www.randalldean.com/Top Ten Outlook E-mail Tips.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/Top_Ten_Outlook_E-mail_Tips.pdf)

15 Ways to Reduce Overall Distraction (Including a Few E-mail Tips):

[http://www.randalldean.com/15 Distraction e-Distraction Reduction Strategies.pdf](http://www.randalldean.com/15_Distraction_e-Distraction_Reduction_Strategies.pdf)

NEW VIDEO: Cleaning Up a Messy Inbox: <https://youtu.be/yEyxLPSg6g8>

Most Popular YouTube e-mail video – converting e-mail into task & calendar in MS Outlook (20K+ views!):

<https://youtu.be/YMhkNcBt9k4>

My Three Favorite Gmail Tips: <https://youtu.be/5Y4cxK4ap-Y>

My "Taming the E-mail Beast" Full YouTube Playlist (16 videos!): <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3CBCCF1FB04D4031>

Subscribe to my YouTube channel or join me on LinkedIn to get notices when new videos and articles are posted:

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/janarandydean> | **LinkedIn:** <http://www.linkedin.com/in/randydean/>

Randy Dean, MBA, The E-mail Sanity Expert®

Most Popular Programs and Descriptions

(All can be delivered in short "conference/meeting" sessions, as well as longer workshop programs, as well as combined to deliver desired content to your group or team.)



FEATURING LATEST SOFTWARE:

Taming the E-mail Beast: Key Strategies for Your Managing E-mail Overload

Every day, managers and professionals are getting buried under a continuing stream of both useful and useless e-mail. Without a system for getting "control of the beast", professionals spend much of their work (and personal) time spinning wheels and feeling highly unsatisfied. If you would like to get control of your e-mail "beast", you should attend this program featuring specific tips for Outlook and Gmail users, but applicable to ANY e-mail user. Learn a proven system for taming your e-mail account, with strategies for keeping your inbox efficient and under control by building and administering a personal "e-mail processing system". Learn how to get rid of all those "quick little" e-mails once and for all, prioritize your most important messages, and mitigate or even eliminate much of that annoying junk and spam. Finally feel on top of your e-mail and related activities, rather than feeling it is on top of you.

NEW THIS YEAR!

Virtual Work & Virtual Meetings: Getting More Productivity From Both

In this new program reflecting our current times with the coronavirus outbreak, Randy Dean, MBA, The E-mail Sanity Expert®, will take his 16+ years of "working from a home office" and leading multiple client meetings and webinars virtually, and provide you with tips that can greatly help increase your productivity and effectiveness with both. We'll discuss critical set up, equipment, software, tools, and apps that will make your work from home experience more productive and less distracting. We will also discuss critical tips for running and/or attending online virtual meetings so they can be more useful and effective. All in a quick 90-minute webinar program!

Updated with Work-From-Home Content! From Distracted to Productive:

Finding Your Focus in Today's Increasingly Interrupted World

E-mail. Texts/IM. Interruptions. Project Transitions. Office Clutter. Smart Phones and Apps! Social and Other Media. Even Family and Friends (and your dogs!) These common distractions make it almost impossible to get anything done, especially for those of us now "working from home" due to the COVID outbreak. It seems like there is always SOMETHING getting in the way of what you really need to do. But with some forethought and effective strategies, as well as some discipline, it is possible to find your focus, even in a hyper-distracted world. We'll have a fun time sharing "game plan" ideas for getting and keeping your distractions under control, and finding critical "focused productivity" time every day, leading to both performance but also clarity of mind and purpose. And, this program is now "audience flexed" -- the speaker will poll the audience at the start of the program to find out YOUR biggest distractions, and will customize the content accordingly.

RECENTLY UPDATED! Smart Phone Success & Terrific Tablets:

Getting More Productivity (and Less Distraction) from Your SmartPhone and Tablet Devices

You know which apps are fun, but what apps and functions will help you turn your Droid, iPhone, and/or Windows device into a productivity workhorse? In this session, we'll discuss the apps, online services and peripheral devices that help take your Smart Phone (and tablets) from "cool" to "critical" when it comes to productivity, time, project, people, and e-mail management as well as "remote" productivity. You might even be able to consider whether the combination of these devices could even replace your "old school" laptop or desktop! And, for clients/attendees using Microsoft Office 365 or Google Suite, we will discuss app integration with your related computer/browser tools. A highlight to this program is when the presenter, Randy Dean, opens up the floor to program participants to share their favorite apps, allowing people to gain knowledge from all program attendees.

Finding an Extra Hour Every Day:

Time Management Tips and Tricks for Busy Professionals

In this popular program on "finding an extra hour of productivity" every day, Randy Dean uses humor and high energy as he goes into many of the most common areas of productivity loss (and possible gain!) afflicting many busy professionals today: managing multiple projects, maintaining "traction" when dealing with tasks and interruptions, managing your e-mails more efficiently, clearing the clutter in your mind for better focus and attention, keeping staff on task, tracking "who owes you what" and getting that information on time, and better managing your calendar and contacts for better time and relationship management. His goal is to help stressed out performers learn several new and immediately useful strategies for finding a few minutes on tasks, activities, and actions you are already doing, leading to at least an extra hour of productivity every day.

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Optimizing Your Outlook: Time Management Tips & Tricks for Busy Outlook Users (Similar to *Finding an Extra Hour*, but specifically for Microsoft Outlook users.)

In this popular program on "getting the most from your Outlook" for MS Outlook Users, Randy goes deeper into many of the most common areas of productivity loss (and possible gain!) afflicting many busy professionals today: managing multiple projects, maintaining "traction" when dealing with tasks and interruptions, getting more from time spent in meetings, clearing the clutter in your mind for better focus, keeping staff on task, tracking "who owes you what" and getting that information on time, and better managing your calendar and contacts for better time and relationship management. His goal is to help stressed out performers learn several new and immediately useful Outlook strategies for finding a few minutes on tasks, activities, and actions you are already doing, leading to at least an extra hour of productivity every day. Get more from all five of the key Outlook functions for greater productivity.

NEW THIS YEAR! OneNote, One Drive, & Office Lens: Three Essential Microsoft 365 Tools for Extended Productivity

Many Microsoft Office users have used Outlook for years for enhanced productivity and communications, but with the rise of Microsoft 365, they now have a whole new suite of tools than can expand productivity, organization, collaboration, and coordination. Three of the easiest tools to use are OneDrive (and the related OneDriveLive.com), OneNote, and the new Office Lens app for scanning and PDF creation. In this new program by Randy Dean, MBA, The E-mail Sanity Expert®, he shows you how these natural extensions to your Microsoft Outlook tools can enhance your real-time productivity, increase the productivity of your related smart-phone/tablet devices, and move beyond individual productivity to deeper team productivity and collaboration.

Time Management in "The Cloud" Using Gmail/Google Suite: Managing Time, Projects, People, Ideas, and E-mail Using Gmail, Google Apps, & Google Chrome

For many years, Microsoft Outlook, Lotus Notes, and other "server-based" productivity applications have been the industry leaders. But in the last few years, popular programs and services created by Google and based in "the cloud" have been emulating the capabilities of these productivity applications, now to the point where a professional could seriously consider "leaping to the cloud" to manage their projects, time, clients, customers, ideas, e-mail, and more. Existing users of Gmail/Google will find they can build a comprehensive system for time/work/e-mail management using tools like Gmail, Google Calendar, Google Tasks, Google Contacts, Google Drive & Docs, and Google Chrome, as well as affiliated apps for their smart phone & tablet devices, and those not using these tools can use this program as a way to see if Gmail/Google can give them what they need to manage this info in their work and/or life. (And, if you are just using Gmail personally, you can see how these other applications might be able to help you better manage your personal information on your personal devices.)

NEW THIS YEAR! Google Keep, Google Drive, and Google Shortcuts: Three Essential Productivity Tools for Google Suite Users

In this program, we'll discuss three very powerful tools readily available to Google users – Keep, Drive, and a Chrome Browser add-on – Google Shortcuts. These tools are a wonderful supplement to those using the Google Suite for productivity, and enhance the user experience and capabilities beyond Gmail and Google Calendar. You will learn how to use Google Keep to create and share notes, checklists, and more; how Drive can be your primary cloud drive for your documents and files, how to share items and documents with Drive, and how to use the Drive app on your phone as a scanning/PDF creation device. You will also learn about Google Shortcuts – a very powerful tool for your Chrome browser that allows you to put your most-used Google apps and tools at your fingertips for quick and easy access. Take your Google usage to a new level with this program!

UPDATED! Managing and Leading Great Staff & Team Meetings (Including Virtual Meetings!)

Well-managed meetings are highly effective tools for keeping people and teams informed and productive, but they don't happen by accident. Unfortunately, many teams and organizations report far too many unproductive meetings causing a drain on productivity and staff morale. Businesses and leaders need to make sure that their meetings are effective, productive, and consistently create value for the organization. If you are a leader that wants to plan and run more effective meetings using the least amount of valuable staff time and resources, this program provides you with the tools and strategies you need to plan, manage, lead, and end effective, efficient meetings. And, with the new rise of virtual tools and meetings due to the coronavirus outbreak, we will also cover several tips and strategies for making your virtual meetings work better and create value. *Finally, this program has a few fun and interactive exercises, including a fun tutorial on how to run a better, more focused brainstorm session!*

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Popular Programs by Randy Dean, MBA – The E-mail Sanity Expert®

NEW FOR 2020! Time Management Regardless of the Tech

Perfect for an audience of mixed users – from paper to high-tech devices and apps

There are so many choices and options for managing your time, projects, tasks, people, and more -- Microsoft Outlook & 365, Google Suite, smart phones & apps, and even still "old school" paper options. In this program, Randy Dean, MBA, The E-mail Sanity Expert(R), will take you through these options and share what he believes are the best techniques, strategies, and routines for being an effective time and project manager, regardless of the tech you decide to use. He will also "cruise" the different software platforms and options, including Microsoft 365 and Google Suite, as well as discuss synchronized set up with your smart phone & tablet devices. We'll even talk a bit about paper! During this program, you can see your options, and following the program, pick the option that is best for you for both work and life management.

Taming the E-mail Etiquette Beast: Finding Sanity in Your Written E-mail Communications

Join Randy Dean, MBA, and author of the recent Amazon e-mail bestseller, *Taming the E-mail Beast*, as he expands beyond e-mail processing, productivity, and efficiency into the realm of e-mail etiquette. We will discuss how to make your emails get attention, actually get read, and then get acted upon. We will deconstruct a good e-mail, starting with smarter subject lines that get noticed and get opened. We will move into opening instructions that make the e-mail easy to understand and make action points, delegations, and deadlines clear and obvious. We'll cover effective body copy that helps recipients fully understand the message. And, we'll talk about effective closes that leave the recipient confident with next actions. AND YES, we'll even discuss how grammar still matters (yes, it does!) We will also discuss multi-party e-mails and how to help make each person's action items and deadlines clear, assisting with team coordination.

We will of course discuss several "problem" e-mail types -- those lacking clear instructions, overusing CC's, FYI's, and "reply alls", emails laden with complex or emotional content, "ping-pong" e-mails (you know -- those e-mails that keep bouncing around between folks) and more. We will also talk about the right way to use e-mail for critical and/or urgent communications, and how to identify and re-use successful e-mail communications and templates to increase efficiency while simultaneously enhancing communications quality.

Ending the Office Clutter & Info Overload: Key Strategies for Managing Your Info Overload, Clutter, and "Stacks & Piles"

If you would like to get control of "the beast" of information overload and all of your "stacks & piles", you should attend this program. Learn how to reduce the mess on your desk by having "natural" places for all of your papers, project folders, items to read, etc. Develop strategies and systems for effective and efficient management of your documents and workstation, as well as electronic files. Learn how to get rid of all of the annoying "little stuff" and "clutter" once and for all, and then keep it under control for the ongoing future. We'll even discuss the possibilities and technology required to move toward a "paperless" workspace. Have a system for managing your info overload in all forms, rather than letting it manage you!

Note that many of these courses can be combined to make solid half- to full-day training programs. Most of these programs also work very well in a live webinar program format, and several clients have even offered a "webinar series" for their employees/group members on several of Randy's topics.

Randy Dean, MBA, The E-mail Sanity Expert®, has been one of the most popular expert speakers on the conference, association, corporate, government, and university training and speaking circuit for several years. The author of the recent Amazon e-mail bestseller, *Taming the E-mail Beast*, Randy is a very popular and engaging time, e-mail, and technology management speaker and trainer. He brings 20+ years of speaking and training experience to his programs, and has been very popular due to his fast-paced, often humorous and always practical programs and content. He is also fully equipped to deliver webinars and virtual presentations.



Simple Tips for Working at Home

By Randy Dean, MBA: The E-mail Sanity Expert®

I have a bit of a head start on you. When I'm not traveling for client work/programs/events, I am a home-based worker, and I've been one for more than 16 years now. I thought I'd share some of my best tips for maintaining productivity and sanity while working from home.



1. **Set up a dedicated “productivity space” and USE IT!** Many people, myself included, think because we have a laptop, we can work from anywhere in the house. And, that is true to a point. However, if you have children home too (and perhaps your spouse as well), they will do everything in their power to distract you while working – loud music, movies, video calls, exercising, etc. If they are old enough, and you let them know you are going into your workspace and you can only be interrupted due to an emergency, most kids will leave you alone. If you camp out on the kitchen table or in the family room however, just expect to get very little done (*Trust me on this. Seriously.*)
2. **Invest in tech and infrastructure.** Make your home office/workspace just like an actual home office/workspace. Get a desk and ergonomic chair. Buy a second monitor. Get some office supplies. Get a printer/copier/fax. Invest in needed software – including possibly video conferencing software/tools. Pay for a higher speed Internet (or get your employer to subsidize your higher speed Internet). “Steal” equipment from your office (take it for now, but bring it back when the outbreak dies down). Do whatever it takes to make your home location nearly as productive (if not more productive) than your regular office location.
3. **Get on a schedule, and stick to it.** Even though you may not have to go into the office, try to stay on your normal schedule (sure, an extra 30 minutes of sleep is OK since you don't have to commute, but no more!) Get up. Make your coffee. Boot up your computer. Check your calendar, build a task list, get through your e-mail. Take a lunch break. Take a workout break. Schedule virtual meetings and tasks. The closer you stay to your normal regimen, the more productive you will be overall, and the easier it will be for you to transition back to your office when things go back to normal. (*Plus, if you show you can be highly productive even while away, perhaps your boss will give you more flexibility to do some remote work in the future!*) I read a great quote the other day that I've tried to make my own personal mantra: ***“I may not enjoy structure and regimen, but I certainly thrive on it.”***
4. **Schedule meetings with yourself.** One of the best tips for better productivity, even if not working from home, is to schedule meetings with yourself. Don't just leave your time wide open – block specific blocks of time each day for different projects, activities, tasks – possibly work and personal. Book time for your most critical projects. Book time for your workout. Book time to read/learn. Give your day some structure, and set goals for better use of time daily.
5. **Schedule meetings with others.** You can still meet with others! Find out what your company uses – Zoom, Webex, GoToMeeting, etc. Or just pick up the phone. Do a conference call. Set up meetings just like normal and have them. That will also add structure and a semblance of normalcy to your day. ***I will give you one funny tip I use frequently*** – do some of your calls from your car in the driveway! You'd be shocked how often I do this – I have kids and dogs in the

house, but I can literally go out in the driveway with my phone and do a regular and/or even a video call in near complete silence. And I don't drive anywhere – I just sit in my driveway.

6. **Have kids? Hire them. This is no joke.** If you have a teenager and younger sibling(s), hire that teenager as an in-house babysitter. Tell them they will make money, but only if they actually WORK to keep the younger ones occupied AND safe. Paying them a few bucks an hour to keep the interruptions down for you is a good investment (and might build stronger relationships between siblings ... if they don't kill each other.) Now, if you have kids of an appropriate age, you might even be able to hire them to do some simple jobs around the house – dishes, vacuuming, laundry, little organization projects, etc. You might even be able to hire them to do some simple business tasks as needed – printing, copying, stapling, organizing. Pay them a few bucks an hour or by job – teach them some skills, keep them useful, and keep your focus!
7. **Don't get lured into distraction.** Now, we've already discussed family, kids, dogs – they are built in natural distractions. However, when working from home, it is SUPER easy to get pulled into social media, streaming the news, having a TV show or movie playing in the background, and those darn addictive games on your phone and/or computer. You need to be aware of your own distractions, and do things to limit them. I allow myself a morning, lunchtime, and end of day news check in – even during this crisis! I don't need to check any more than that, and I promise you this – in this day and age of “overconnected people”, *if something truly huge happens, you will hear about it quickly.*

I also noticed I had 2-3 different games on my phone that were getting a bit too much time/attention. I deleted all but one, and that one (Words with Friends) has LONG breaks in between plays usually. I look at it once or twice a day for a few minutes as a mental break – that is just fine. But any more than that I can't afford. And with social media, I've tried to check in about once a day on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. That is enough to stay in touch, but no more. Plus, there is just a ton of “panic porn” (funny phrase I first saw by author Dan Rust recently) on both the regular news and social media platforms right now. You could stir yourself right into a panic attack if on there too much right now. Instead, give yourself a few mental breaks a day with these tools and venues, but no more, and keep your focus otherwise on something productive. *“The best cure to anxiety is focused action.”* – Jack Nicklaus

Are you an employer with people suddenly working at home? You need to give them some leniency right now. This is an unprecedented situation. Suddenly, we have all of these people used to working in a normal workplace environment that are trying to balance kids and dogs and spouses. Now, remember that some of your workers will actually be MORE productive working from home, and that will help to counterbalance the loss of productivity by others. Do what you can to make it easy for them to be productive, but if you have good people, don't damage your relationship with them in the long run due to a short term hit to their productivity right now. And remember they will most likely get more productive over time as they get into a routine depending on how long this goes. Hopefully if they follow the steps above, they will get into that productive work-from-home routine even a bit faster. ***We can get through this together ... just as long as we are at least six feet apart.***

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Gmail Tips: 3 Favorites: <https://youtu.be/5Y4cxK4ap-Y>

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Google Tasks: A Deeper Dive for Higher Usage: <https://youtu.be/qVuiVznLpXw>

How I use Google Keep for Note Management: <https://youtu.be/oQAqrWZFkY>

A Useful Chrome Add-on: Google Shortcuts: <https://youtu.be/TPc-sOmweI8>

E-mail Strategy/Tip Videos/Vlogs:

BRAND NEW: 60-min Taming E-mail Interview: <https://youtu.be/leeXwkRyFT0>

How we manage e-mail/projects/tasks "backwards": <https://youtu.be/THtjMGAV9ko>

Three philosophies for e-mail folder design: <https://youtu.be/ErAw1ZUYXS4>

Cleaning up a MESSY inbox! <https://youtu.be/yEyxLPSq6q8>

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Using Blank Wall as Zoom Green Screen: <https://youtu.be/69ZqRsM7YXk>

Zoom White Board/Interactive Brainstorm: <https://youtu.be/rkNqVCQ6N9Q>

Other Strategy/Tip Videos/Vlogs:

Super Simple Tip for Reducing Start-of-Day Distraction (by adjusting settings in Outlook & Google/Gmail): <https://youtu.be/oCsDDIQodD4>

Office/Desk Clutter Clean-up Recommended Process: <https://youtu.be/ez-v5nILB9Q>

Two Suggested Meetings to Make Your Teams and Meetings Both Work Better!
<https://youtu.be/zyGZBto7LMs>

Adjusting Windows Settings for "Tired Eyes": <https://youtu.be/wssqb1HGp6I>

Smart Phone Favorite Reference Apps: <https://youtu.be/argXROFkt-E>

Just for Fun:

Five Minutes of Random Tech Tips: <https://youtu.be/ES1cw4KGpv4>

Yellowstone National Park: My Personal Top Ten (This is actually my most viewed video on my channel!): <https://youtu.be/0K2W7ryn3C0>

My 14 Minute Demo Video: Live Showcase Event: <https://youtu.be/Csu1qjNRedI>

Four Beach Trip "Life Hacks" (this was fun): https://youtu.be/-ZE_2RlrRfI

One of my very first YouTube videos: How the "Totally Obsessed" Time Management Guy Does His Leaves Each Fall: <https://youtu.be/8Qn04PBtKfI>

More?

Yes, I'll be making a LOT more videos in coming years. I'm planning to add more videos on 365 tools & tips, Google Suite tools, more Vlogs (video blog posts), as well as redoing some of my more popular but older tech videos for Outlook and Gmail.

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