

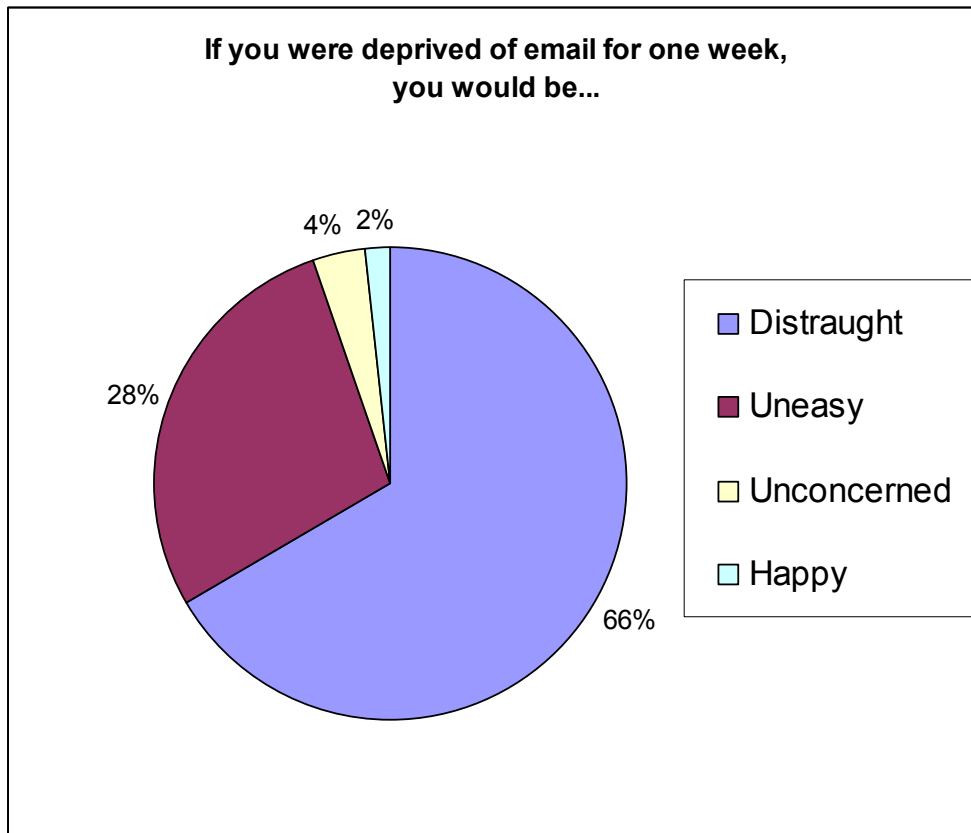
Email Use Survey – The Results Are In

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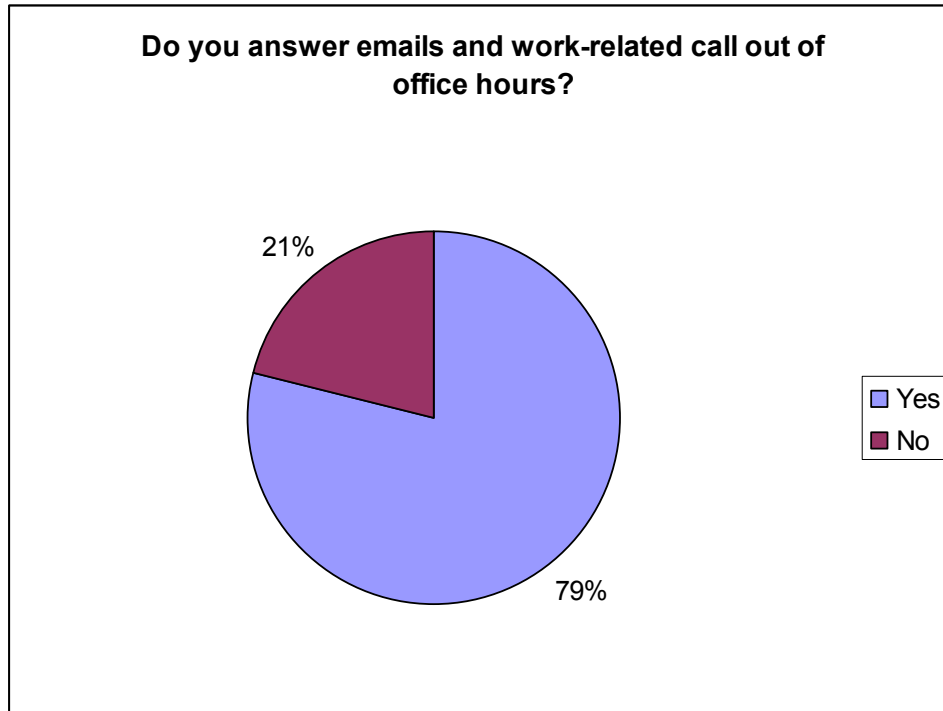
The survey of TechTalk readers (257 meeting planners and suppliers) from the last issue of TechTalk has issued some interesting results. Thanks to Ennect (www.ennect.com) for providing the web survey platform to collect the data.

The results show a high dependence and a constant vigilance of our email:

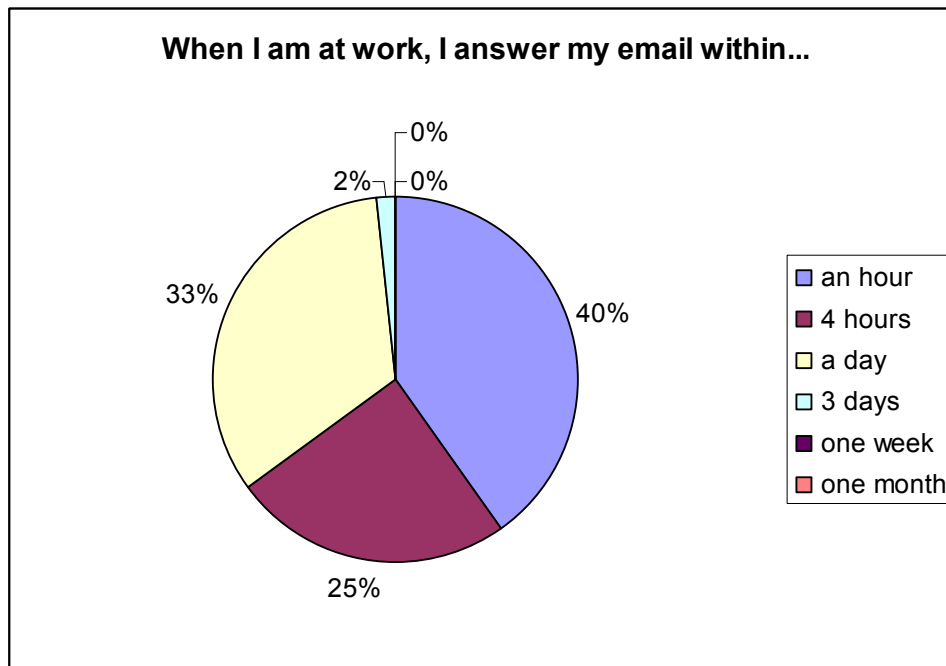
When asked “If we were deprived of email for one week, how we would feel?” a very high dependency and need is shown – 2/3 of us would be “distraught” while nearly all of the rest would be “uneasy.”



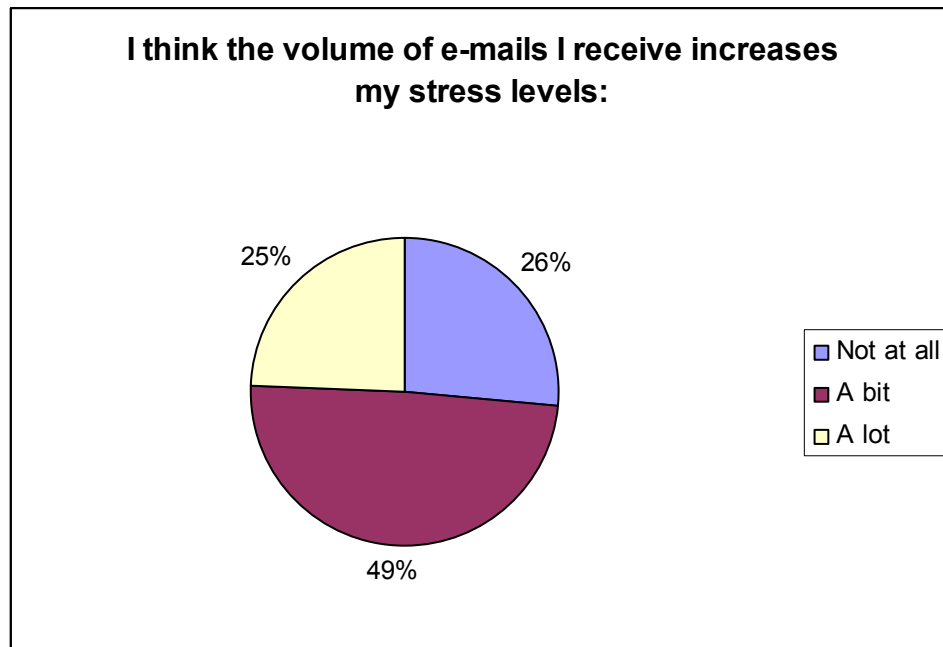
79% of respondents answer email and work-related calls out of office hours:



We are very quick to answer our emails, with 40% answering immediately or within 1 hour and all but 2% answer within a day.



Despite the constant vigilance, the quick response rates, and the high perceived pressure to be able to check email, we seem to be tolerating the stress level alright. Only 25% replied they felt the volume of emails increase stress levels “a lot” , less than the 26% the replied “not at all” with the remainder (49%) answering “a bit.”



From an efficiency standpoint, some of these figures may be problematic. Although there may be times where the importance of a potential email requires one to drop everything to monitor every email message as it comes in, I suspect that most of the time, this is not the case. We need to manage our email rather than it managing us!

This constant vigilance of an email inbox is reminiscent of when fax machines became popular in the late 80's. In those novelty days, people would jump up from their desks to gather around the fax machine to watch the paper slowly emerge from the machine. Although not quite as apparent, when we stop what we are doing, lose our train of thought to check out the latest in a constant stream of email messages, we can be letting the seemingly urgent outweigh what is important.

I suggest we must manage our email differently to improve our time management. Here are a few suggestions from one of my recent articles to accomplish this:

1. **Turn off the distracting chime announcing new emails.** This chime is one of the biggest killers of office efficiency. This will allow time to work and think without this constant distraction. (To stop this in Outlook: click “Tools,” choose “Options,” click the “Preferences” tab, click “Email Options,” click the “Advanced Email Options,” then uncheck the “Play a Sound” box. While you are there, also uncheck the “Display a New Mail Desktop Alert” box so that the distracting email announcement box does not appear on your desktop.)

2. **Set your email reader for a delivery period longer than every few minutes.** This will depend on how connected you feel you need to be. Personally I have set mine for every 90 minutes. This, too, will reduce distraction. (To set this in Outlook: Click “Tools,” highlight “Send/Receive,” drop down to “Send/Receive Settings,” choose “Define Send/Receive Groups,” and, in the box that opens, choose the number of minutes you desire for “Schedule and automatic send/receive every xx minutes.”)
3. **Learn to use your email rules function.** Even though you have turned off your automatic email notifications, you still can be notified when a key client or your boss emails you by using email filters or rules. Although simple to set up, the details are too lengthy to list here. An excellent basic tutorial on creating rules in Outlook can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/26jr7y>.
4. **Use a good spam filter.** An effective spam filter with a low false-positive rate (one that doesn't classify legitimate email as spam) can greatly improve email efficiency. The choice of filters is usually decided by the IT department in larger organizations. But for those of you in a SOHO (small office/home office), I recommend the Cloudmark Desktop (www.cloudmark.com) as one that has worked well for me over the past few years.

As we place great value on this means of communication, we must figure out a way to use this medium to the greatest efficiency. The above suggestions will help up manage the “email beast” and keep what seems urgent from overriding the important.

Corbin Ball, CMP, CSP is a professional speaker and consultant focusing on meetings technology. With 20 years of experience running international citywide technology meetings, he now helps clients worldwide use technology to save time and improve productivity He can be contacted at his extensive web site: www.corbinball.com.