Staying at the Helm through an E-mail Storm

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E-mail is now listed as the number one cause for loss of productivity in the workplace. The volume of e-mail will continue to increase as technology develops more ways to stay "wired" throughout the day and night. However, the volume of e-mail is less a problematic than unproductive habits around sending/responding to e-mails.

How do you lead your company though the e-mail storm to calmer waters of increased productivity?

The two most effective strategies for bringing e-mail back to a highly efficient tool are:
- To develop a consistent protocol for internal e-mails within a company, and
- To cultivate a set of habits for responding and sending e-mails.

Consider adopting a ***protocol*** within your company with these quick-tip approaches to e-mail management.

1. When arriving at the office, spend the first half hour or hour focusing on your highest priority projects. Let colleagues know that you don't look at e-mails until 9:15. People adjust when they know what is going on.
2. If you must look at e-mail first thing, do so with great discipline. Only process the highest priority e-mails. You determine what those are, not the "urgent" exclamation point frequently used by squeaky wheels.
3. Use Outlook's color-coding feature (click tools, then organize). Give your supervisor or important client a color. When you see those e-mails come through, they will get your immediate attention.
4. Using the same feature, you can flag all your e-mails when you are the only addressee helping your avoid spending time on cc e-mails.
5. Personal favorite! Use the subject line for the whole message when appropriate. Why have a colleague open an e-mail when all you are saying is "the meeting is at 4:00," "thank you," "I enjoyed meeting you today," "Call me at 7:00 tomorrow." Let them know it is not necessary to open e-mail with an (EOM) at the end….End of Message!
6. Always consider the value of a face-to-face interaction vs. e-mail. This is especially true if you are e-mailing the person in the office next to yours!

Standardize these procedures and watch productivity rise. (EOM)

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