

Email Management
Tipu Parvez
Operations Manager South West UK
SVITZER UK

A lot of us would remember the time when we asked, 'what's an email'?

Well that was then, today the number of worldwide email accounts continue to grow from over 4.1 billion accounts in 2014 to over 5.2 billion accounts by the end of 2018. In 2014, the business world sent and received 108.7 billion emails per day and by 2018, a total of 139.4 billion emails will be sent and received per day. On average in 2014, a business user sent and received 121 emails a day, and this too is expected to grow to 140 emails a day by 2018.

So it is fair to say, email is the most pervasive form of communication in the business world. This leads us to the issue of email management, particularly when you are on holidays. This is when you are supposed to be getting away from all of it, yet you find yourself searching for a wifi signal so you can check your emails. This could be because you have to answer an urgent question or you simply want to avoid going back to work to hundreds of unread emails.

Well, recently the German company Daimler made headlines. Email their people while they are on holiday and you will get a message like this:

I am on vacation. I cannot read your email. Your email is being deleted. Please contact Hans or Monika if it's really important, or resend the email after I'm back in the office.

Daimler's move follows Volkswagen's decision to turn email off after office hours and new guidelines in France ordering workers in some sectors to ignore work emails when they go home.

This may seem a radical approach, and there are other ways by which we can manage email. For example, in Southampton my team has clear instructions not to send emails to an individual when they are on holiday. Before going on holiday an individual sends an Outlook calendar reminder to their team. This prompts the team to create a folder called *While You Were Away* and all emails which we think are of importance are kept in this folder.

Once the individual is back from holiday and they have had their post-holiday meeting with their manager, only then these emails are sent to them.

We have managed to achieve this by following two simple steps:

1. Completing a comprehensive *Shore Hand-Over Form* and
2. Cross training in key aspects of each other's roles

With the advancements in mobile technology the boundaries of the workplace are set to expand. However, if we take a more structured approach then there is no reason why we cannot manage these boundaries better.

Although this experiment is in its infancy we are already seeing the benefits of this approach. In a trial we conducted locally, it was quickly realised that most issues were dealt with prior to the return of the individual from holiday and, on average, there were half a dozen emails which were kept for them in the *While You Were Away* folder.

So far it is a win-win situation, whereby you can enjoy your holiday without searching for that elusive wifi signal, and come back to work refreshed!