

INBOX ZERO

The counterintuitive method to
clear your inbox to zero



Patrick Cattin

I recall a time when my email inbox was flooded with hundreds of messages!



Life then was pure chaos! My days were a relentless rush, moving from one emergency to another, one interruption to the next, and one meeting after another. Amidst this hectic pace, I would glance through my emails, attempting to reply to as many as possible and empty it whenever I could.

It was a futile effort, trying to empty the ocean with a teaspoon. My overflowing inbox had devolved into a disorganized, chaotic to-do list, dictating my entire day. Most of my tasks were simply emails in my inbox.

Lunch breaks were brief, often spent at my desk, eating a quick snack while going through an endless stream of messages, trying to make headway through my tasks and emails. At the end of each day, many emails remained unread or only superficially scanned, forcing me to tackle them late at night, after putting my children to bed.

This routine left barely quality time for relaxation or family.

Weekends were no respite; I often found myself telling my wife, "I have so many emails to sort through this weekend and will have to find time to do it". Missed deadlines became a norm, causing much frustration. I distinctly remember the HR department persistently chasing me for administrative tasks lost in the abyss of my inbox. At that time, they would really be mad at me. My important emails were buried under less critical ones, and dealing with priorities in an organized way was like an impossible task. The constant state of a full, uncontrollable inbox was a continuous source of stress and exhaustion.

It felt as if my life was governed by my inbox!

Personal life suffered; I missed some real friends' birthdays, and relaxation was rare, overshadowed by the constant urge to clear my inbox. This endless cycle, seen as a never-ending battle, persisted until I reached a point of full exhaustion.

That's when I started to read books on productivity, tasks, and emails management.

That's when I made an AMAZING discovery:

*It was possible to handle emails quickly and stay organized,
and yes, it was possible to achieve a daily empty inbox!*

"This week I'm feeling so much less stressed, my mailbox full was generating an immense stress. Seeing it empty and organized saves me so much time to get on with my real tasks.

Caroline



This realization marked the beginning of an incredible journey.

I discovered productive, calm, and serene working methods with amazing tools and techniques. The foundation of this transformation was learning how to deal with the overwhelming flow of emails and achieve 'INBOX Zero' – a state of having an absolutely empty inbox. A state of peace, joy and sense of control!

You might find the concept of INBOX Zero unreachable as your inbox is probably overflowing with emails, and the idea of starting afresh might seem discouraging.

This guide is precisely here for you. It will provide step-by-step guidance to clear your inbox today, no matter the number of emails – be it 50, 150, or as many as 15,000.

The method applies universally, preparing you to experience the freedom that comes with an empty inbox and this liberating feeling. If you have never worked with zero emails or have never seen an empty inbox, this will be life-changing for you.

Even if your inbox consistently contains about 10–20 emails and never fewer, this approach will offer you a profoundly new experience.

**INBOX Zero means exactly that: Zero emails in your inbox, not just Zero unread emails:
ZERO, NONE!**

The goal is to reach a point where your main inbox is completely empty, giving you a sense of peace and control. Of course, there will always be emails to answer and tasks to do, but with an empty inbox, you gain a sense of control, and that feeling is blissful!

Of course, emails will continue to arrive, and tasks will persist, but achieving an empty inbox offers a profound sense of control. This newfound clarity and order is not just beneficial; it's blissful. This is the Foundation for enhanced focus and productivity.

INBOX ZERO: A Non-Negotiable Habit!

Working daily with an empty inbox is the cornerstone of good personal organization. You can be incredibly organized in other areas, but if your inbox is a mess, stress will always be around and there, consciously, or unconsciously.



"It's so nice to see my email inbox empty and that it's super motivating to keep it that way. I've realised that I used to use it as a to-do list and that I wasted a lot of time going over it several times. Now I can see how much time I save by emptying it every day! It's really motivating and amazing!"

Paul

INBOX Zero daily is a complete Game-Changer

1. An Empty Inbox brings an immense joy:

The satisfaction of an empty inbox is immense. It brings immense joy and a sense of control amid the constant inflow of tasks and emails. Once you experience this, you won't accept a cluttered inbox ever again!!

2. Inbox is meant for communication:

This is a communication tool and was never meant to be an archiving tool. Using it as a todo list leads to chaos, missed deadlines, and lost control over tasks.

3. A cluttered inbox leads to reading the same email several times:

Often, we reopen emails multiple times due to unclear titles, leading to a significant waste of time and energy. In fact, studies have shown that people typically reopen the same emails between 3 to 7 times, which is a huge loss of time and focus. Repeatedly reading emails eats up valuable time. Imagine the time lost in understanding an email's content and refocusing on your tasks afterward.

4. An Empty Inbox reduces distractions and boosts your productivity:

A full inbox can be a big source of distraction and loss of time! Once empty you can focus fully on important tasks. An empty inbox is also the foundation of a good personal organization system. It ensures that nothing critical is overlooked and support efficient management of tasks and responsibilities, leading to a more organized workflow.

5. An Empty Inbox reduces stress:

It eliminates the overwhelming feeling of a cluttered email space which can even bring a sense of suffocation. An empty inbox brings a sense of peace and calm.

6. An Empty Inbox leads to clarity and professionalism:

A clutter-free inbox provides clarity and focus, which is so key for helping in setting priorities and making decisions. An empty inbox shows a high level of professionalism. When people watch or look at your inbox, it looks really serious and organized!

REACH INBOX Zero *through an unconventional approach*

Now, let's dive into how to achieve INBOX Zero through an unconventional approach. This method is for you if you've struggled to maintain a manageable inbox, regardless of its current state, should you have 10, 100, 1,000 or 10,000 emails it works.

Don't be concerned about the number of emails in your inbox. As of now, the highest number I've encountered is 18,000 emails! Yes, that's right, one person had 18,000 emails in their inbox.

The encouraging part is that this individual successfully cleared their inbox in less than an hour using the straightforward method I'm about to share with you.

Embracing the Unconventional Approach to Inbox Zero

The conventional approach to achieving an empty inbox often involves processing each email individually. However, this method becomes increasingly challenging as the number of emails grows.

Over time, reducing your inbox to zero can seem like an unattainable goal. You might, on some highly motivated days, manage to reduce your inbox to around 100, 50, or even 20 emails, but soon it fills up again, leaving you far from experiencing true inbox Zero – a completely empty email inbox.

The continuous inflow of new emails can be demotivating and prevent you from making progress. Inbox zero – the counterintuitive method to clear to clear your method to Zero. You might find your inbox so overwhelmed that you may lose the motivation to even start organizing it. For some, maintaining about 30, 50, or 100 emails in the inbox might seem OK, but this is far from the ideal of inbox zero.

Having even 30 emails can create a sense of chaos. New emails push the older ones down, making them disappear on your screen, which can lead to stress, whether you're consciously aware of it or not.

Given these challenges, it becomes clear that trying to sort through and deal with every email in your inbox with the goal to bring it back to Zero might not be realistic, or it could, would require a significant amount of energy, courage, and time.

Instead, I suggest an unconventional method: **we will reset your inbox artificially.**

This approach is different but effective, and you'll quickly grasp how it works once we start the process.



The unconventional approach to INBOX Zero is about resetting your inbox

We will move all emails from your current inbox to a new folder called "Old Emails."

This instantly empties your inbox, creating a fresh start.

Next, we'll transfer the most recent emails (from the last two weeks or about 50-150 emails) to a new folder named "**TEMPORARY INBOX.**"

This will be your backlog folder, while your main inbox remains clear for new incoming emails.



ARE YOU NOW READY TO EMPTY YOUR INBOX in a few seconds ? LETS GO !

The process is simple:

Microsoft Outlook

Select All the Emails in your Inbox

1. Open your Outlook inbox.
2. Click on any email to focus on the list
3. Press Ctrl + A to select all the emails

Move all the emails to the new folder "Old Emails" or Archive

1. Right-click on any of the selected email
2. Choose "Move" and then select the "Old Emails" folder. If it doesn't exist, create it first.
3. Alternatively, you can transfer all emails by dragging and dropping them into the "Old Emails" folder

Select 100 Emails or Last 2 Weeks' Emails and move into

1. and move the "Old Emails" folder, sort emails by date.
2. For 100 emails, manually select the top 100 emails.
3. For the last 2 weeks, manually select emails from the past two weeks.
4. Drag and drop them into the "TEMPORARY INBOX" folder (create it if it doesn't exist).

Use the above process, either with Right-Click or by move/dragging.

Gmail

Select All Emails in Inbox

1. Open Gmail and go to the inbox.
2. Click the checkbox in the upper-left corner above the emails to select all emails in the current view.
3. If you have more than one page of emails, click the link that appears to select all emails across all pages.

Move to "Old Emails" or Archive

1. Click the "Move to" folder icon, then select or create the "Old Emails" folder.
2. For archiving, click the "Archive" button (a box with a downward arrow).

Select 100 Emails or Last 2 Weeks' Emails

1. Search for newer_than:14d in the search bar to find emails from the last 2 weeks, or scroll and manually select 100 emails.
2. Drag them into the "TEMPORARY INBOX" folder or use the "Move to" option.

Apple Mail

Select All Emails in Inbox

1. Open Apple Mail and click on your inbox.
2. Press Cmd + A to select all emails.

Move to "Old Emails" or Archive

1. Drag the selected emails to the "Old Emails" folder. Create the folder if it doesn't exist.
- For archiving, right-click and choose "Archive" or use the "Archive" button in the toolbar.

Select 100 Emails or Last 2 Weeks' Emails

1. Sort emails by date.
2. Manually select 100 emails or emails from the last 2 weeks.
3. Drag them into the "TEMPORARY INBOX" folder.

Inbox Zero – the counterintuitive method to clear your inbox to Zero

Yahoo Mail

Select All Emails in Inbox

1. Open your Yahoo Mail inbox.
2. Click the checkbox at the top left to select all emails.

Move to "Old Emails" or Archive

1. With emails selected, click the "Move" icon.

Choose or create the "Old Emails" folder.

5. For archiving, click the "Archive" button.

For Other Email Tools:

Follow a similar process tailored to your email service.



You now have a completely emptied main inbox.

Don't worry, your emails are safe in the "Old Emails" or "Temporary Inbox" folders.

Now you have 2 systems:

1. The restart INBOX : empty and ready to be emptied everyday.
2. The TEMPORARY INBOX which is your backlogged emails and you need now to work some time on it. Set yourself a maximum of four days (or ideally 1-2 days) to empty it.

Take the time now to go through it!

KEEP your inbox at ZERO

Congratulations on achieving an empty inbox!

Now, let's focus on maintaining this clutter-free state every day.

The key is simple: you have to **DECIDE** on an action for each email you receive! It's now crucial not to let emails stay in your inbox anymore. Instead, decide immediately what to do with them.



DECIDE: the 4D Approach

Whenever you check an email, **ALWAYS** decide which of these four actions to take:

1. **Delete:** If an email does not need any action either delete it immediately or move it to an archive folder/classify it.
2. **Do:** If an email can be answered in under 2-3 minutes, do it right away and then archive or delete it.
3. **Delegate:** For emails that can be handled by someone else, forward them directly, then move the email to a "Delegated" folder.
4. **Defer:** For emails requiring more time, move them to a "To-Do" or "Follow-Up" folder.

Once you have sorted and emptied your Inbox, regularly review and clear out the "Delegated" and "To-Do" folders to keep your inbox at zero.

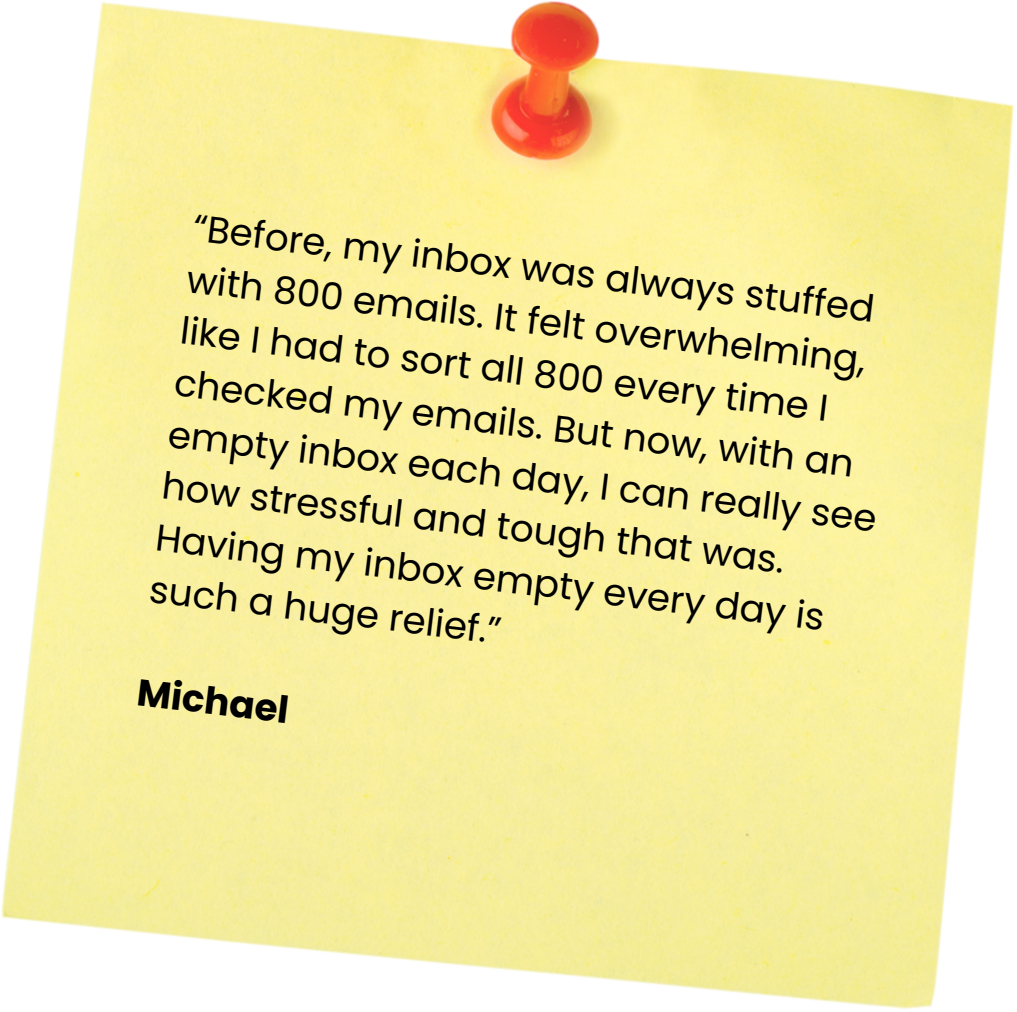
By following these steps, you'll not only keep your inbox clean but also manage your emails efficiently.

WELL DONE and CONGRATULATIONS!

You have now emptied your inbox and only this is AMAZING!

You have also a simple but effective process to keep it empty and this will be the start of a new life.

You may feel like Michael, one of my coachees, who wrote me:



"Before, my inbox was always stuffed with 800 emails. It felt overwhelming, like I had to sort all 800 every time I checked my emails. But now, with an empty inbox each day, I can really see how stressful and tough that was. Having my inbox empty every day is such a huge relief."

Michael

Take the Mastering Your Inbox Challenge!



“This course is really so useful:
It puts operational efficiency
back on the map. It gives
practical and technical tips on
how to achieve this with email
management (keyboard
shortcuts/ quick answers for
sorting your email inbox, how
and when to deal with
emails.)”
Julia

If you're interested in further mastering your email management skills, I have prepared a 15-day Mastering Your Inbox Challenge. This is a very life-changing training that covers all you need to know to deal efficiently and above all serenely with your INBOX.

Through daily emails, I'll share tips and tricks that have helped hundreds of people significantly reduce their inbox time, bringing joy and efficiency back into their work and personal lives.

This challenge will empower you to keep your inbox under control and focus on what truly matters.

Through this challenge you will learn:

- When and how to deal with your emails
- How to work even faster with your emails and gain 5-10 minutes a day with using shortcuts
- The secret to reduce by 2 the time you spend into your inbox daily
- How to make clear and powerful emails
- How to deal with unwanted emails
- How to set efficiently and systematically the 4D process

The challenge is indeed a complete system that will help you become an email Ninja!

I will also challenge you daily to make sure you will anchor definitively those powerful habits and techniques daily.

Check your inbox very soon for more info!

Once again, well done on your progress, and I look forward to helping you become an email management ninja!

About Me



A few years ago, as a partner in a large international audit firm, I encountered a period where I was completely overwhelmed at work. I found myself swamped with a relentless flood of emails, meetings, and interruptions, especially towards the year-end, just before the Christmas season. At that point, finding a solution became vital for my health and family life. This necessity pushed me during the Christmas season to delve into several productivity books, and to my great surprise, I discovered simple yet effective techniques to manage the constant stream of requests and demands!

I implemented some of these strategies and, almost overnight, regained control of my day and my inbox, allowing me to remain calm and energized consistently. This was so amazing yet so simple ! This exploration ignited a deep passion within me for time management, productivity, and enhancing work efficiency and joy.

Since then, I have read over 40 books on productivity and time management, participated in dozens of online and other training programs, and immersed myself in various methods and approaches.

I truly became a productivity expert and began to offer training within my company, eventually extending to many corporate entities. Over time, I developed my own unique training program on productivity at work.

I am now so enthusiastic about sharing the personal strategies I have developed. I firmly believe that suffering at work is unnecessary and that success and enjoyable workdays are attainable for everyone through simple tactics, habits, and tips.

Having witnessed the profound impact my trainings and coachings have had on the lives of hundreds, I have now set my mission to share these insights more broadly and help others regain control over their days and lives, achieve a sense of calm, improve their personal organization, and become more efficient and happier in both their professional and personal lives.

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