



PRODUCTIVITY *for* ANIMAL ADVOCATES

David van Beveren and James Morgan



CONTENTS

3	INTRODUCTION	36	DELEGATE
		36	The Art of Letting Go
6	TIME-SAVING MINDSET	37	When & How to Delegate
6	Get into the Time-Saving Mindset	39	BCC: The Magic of Exclusion
8	Challenge & Recommendations	40	Challenge & Recommendations
9	WHAT DISTRACTS, DETRACTS	41	WHAT EMAIL IS (AND ISN'T) FOR
9	Distractions Are the Number One Enemy	41	What Isn't Email For?
10	Preparations for Productivity	42	What Is Email For?
14	Challenge & Recommendations	43	Challenge & Recommendations
15	OPTIMIZE	44	FINAL WORDS
15	Optimizing Your Workflow	44	Key Takeaways
16	Inbox Zero	45	Looking Forward & Next Steps
17	Quick Tips for Email		
18	Email Templates	46	RESOURCES
21	What About AI?	46	Apps & Websites
22	Other Tips	47	AI for Email and Everything
25	Challenge & Recommendations	48	Podcasts
		48	Communities
26	AUTOMATE	49	Books
26	Automating is All About Saving Time	50	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
27	Filter Emails	50	Studies Referenced
29	Label Emails		
32	Voice Dictation		
33	Schedule to Send		
34	Scheduling Meetings		
35	Challenge & Recommendations		

INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS MATTERS

Let's face it—working in animal advocacy is tough.

The hours are long, the pay often doesn't match the effort,¹ and the emotional toll can be heavy. Those in this field are typically paid less than their peers in other non-profits, and despite that, they often work longer hours and deal with a constant sense of overload.²

The work itself, although without a doubt worthwhile, is emotionally taxing. Regular exposure to animal cruelty can lead to emotional exhaustion, burnout, and even depression or anxiety.³ At home, it doesn't get much easier—there's often a clash between personal values and societal norms, leading to tensions with friends and family.⁴ This constant pressure, both at work and at home, can make life feel overwhelming and exhausting.

Building on a Faunalytics study that highlighted significant issues with advocate retention,⁵ it was no surprise that marginalized groups often face the toughest challenges.⁶ Another study found that advocates from marginalized groups earned just 85 cents for every dollar their non-marginalized peers made.⁷

So, what are animal advocates supposed to do? While better pay, reasonable hours, and a sustainable approach, prioritizing our mental health, **are all essential**, this ebook is just one small piece of the puzzle. At worst, we hope this helps you reclaim some time, and at best, potentially prevent burnout!

That said, unlike many other guides, courses and books, we won't try to dive into every single tool or trick out there given the variety of workflows, work environments, and the different services we all use. Instead, we'll zero in on one tool that everyone uses daily—**email**.

By learning to optimize, automate, and delegate your email tasks, you'll develop valuable skills, embrace the excitement of productivity techniques, and adopt a mindset that can improve other areas of your workflow. Our goal is to help you work smarter, not harder, so you can maintain—or even boost—your impact for animals, all while reducing your work time and stress!

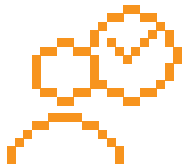
ACKNOWLEDGING DIFFERENT WORKFLOWS

We recognize that roles within animal advocacy, along with their workflows and challenges, vary greatly. As you read this book, think about which strategies fit your unique role. We hope you find tips to support your work and help you tackle the productivity challenges you might face.



WHAT YOU'LL BE **LEARNING ABOUT**

Here's a quick look at what you can expect in the coming chapters:



CHAPTER 1

Adopt a Time-Saving Mindset

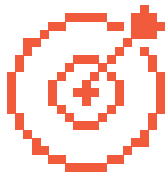
We'll dive into the mindset shifts needed to value your time and use it more effectively.



CHAPTER 6

The Limits of Email

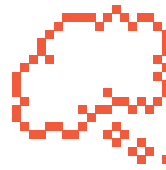
Recognize when email is the wrong tool for the job and what to use instead.



CHAPTER 2

Eliminate Distractions, Maximize Focus

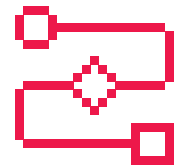
Learn how to identify and manage distractions that sap your productivity.



CHAPTER 7

Parting Thoughts

We'll wrap up with final tips on how to maintain and build on the productivity strategies you've learned.



CHAPTER 3

Optimize Your Workflow

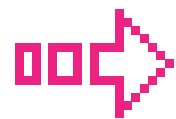
Discover ways to streamline your tasks and tools for maximum efficiency.



RESOURCES

Your Toolkit

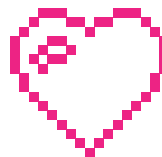
A curated list of resources, tools, and further reading to support your productivity journey.



CHAPTER 4

Automate to Accelerate

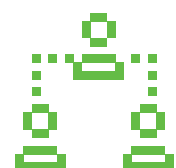
Explore automation techniques that can save you time by handling repetitive tasks.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Gratitude and Sources

Acknowledgments and references for the studies and quotes that informed this book.



CHAPTER 5

Master the Art of Delegation

Understand how to delegate tasks effectively, freeing up your time for high-impact work.

Each chapter is designed to build on the last. Let's get started!

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



David van Beveren

Founder and President
Vegan Hacktivists

DAVID is the President of [Vegan Hacktivists](#) and Co-Founder of [Violet Studios](#), where he directs strategic vision, cultivates key partnerships, and steers core projects. David also currently serves as Grant Manager at [Craigslist Charitable Fund](#), overseeing grant operations, proposal evaluation, and program development.

Before this role, David led a software firm that supported U.S. K-12 and higher education institutions, including renowned universities like UCLA, Princeton, and Duke University.

David's journey into technology and productivity began at age 13, fueled by a constant drive to maximize his results with minimal effort. He believes that this drive to find the most time-saving methods has been the backbone of his output and achievements.



James Morgan

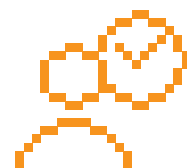
Executive Director
Vegan Hacktivists

JAMES serves as the Executive Director of [Vegan Hacktivists](#), where he spearheads initiatives that harness technology for animal advocacy, oversees the organization's primary operations, and cultivates a global community of volunteers committed to advancing the animal protection movement.

James has had several roles in the technology sector from software engineering to product management. He has led on major software projects spanning aviation, television and advertising in a ten year career.

James' passion for technology ignited in childhood, fueled by his fascination with salvaged computers and retro game consoles. He loved modding these devices for peak performance, learning the value of optimization and "less is more"—lessons that have stayed with him into adulthood.

SPECIAL THANKS to Gabrielè, Kate, Leanne, and Thomas who contributed to this book's content and design.



CHAPTER 1

TIME-SAVING MINDSET

Get into the time-saving mindset.

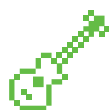
If you had one extra hour a day, how would you spend it? Would you reinvest it in your work to boost your impact? Or would you dedicate that time to self-care, spending more quality time with friends, family, or your partners? What about learning a new language?

According to the Foreign Service Institute, reaching a basic conversational level of Spanish takes about 250-350 hours of study. With that one extra hour, you could achieve this goal in less than a year. What else could you achieve with that time? For yourself? For those around you? For the animals?

Here's a better example closer to home:

Imagine a nonprofit manager who reclaims an hour each day by delegating more effectively. She uses that time to strategize her organization's next major campaign, which ends up doubling their reach. Or think of a grassroots organizer who cuts out unnecessary meetings and spends that extra hour connecting with community members, resulting in a stronger, more engaged volunteer base.

Just for fun, let's see what else you could do with that extra hour by the end of the year:



Learn to play the guitar
(300-400 hours)



Learn to code in Python
(300-400 hours)



Get fit and build muscle
(150-250 hours)

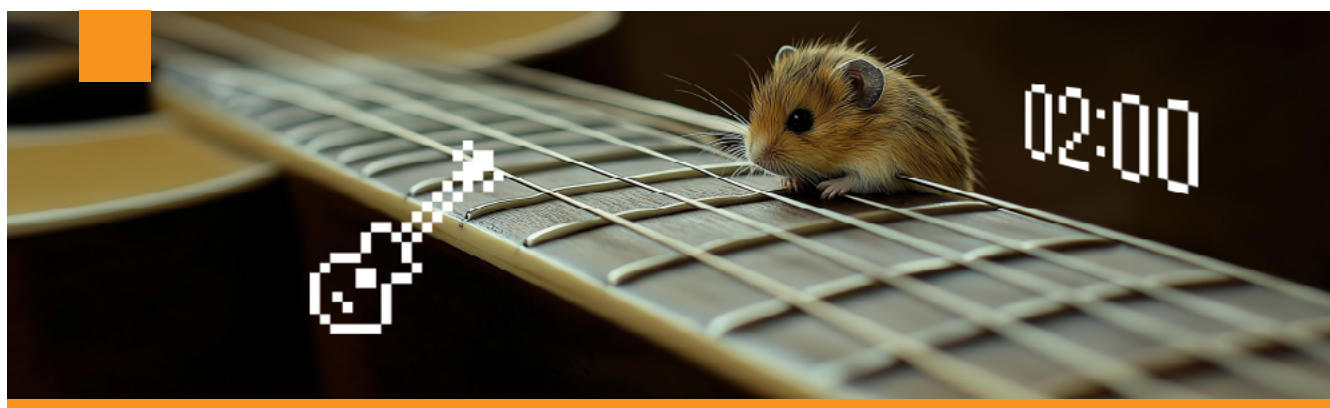


Write a 70,000-word novel
(200-300 hours)



Prepare and run a full marathon
(250-300 hours)

Now, what if you had *two* extra hours?



The point here is that if you treat time as the most valuable resource it is, your productivity will skyrocket in your life and in your work. On the other hand, treating it like a commodity risks mediocre results, or worse, mediocre impact. **How you value and manage your time** is going to be one of the largest factors determining your success.

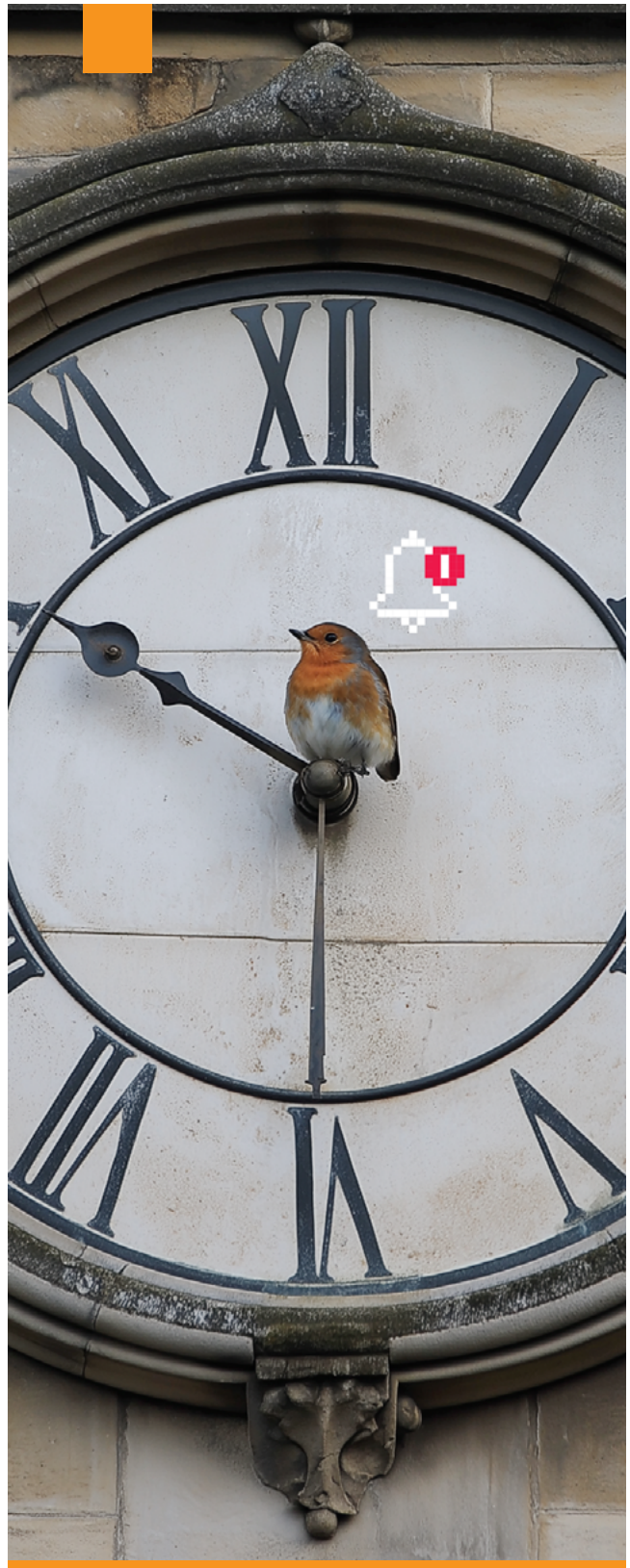
If you're up for some existential contemplation, check out how many weeks you really have available to you from birth to death by [clicking here](#). Then, come back to this ebook with a renewed sense of motivation to make every hour, day, and week, count.

As we work to reclaim every valuable minute, the next step is identifying low-hanging fruit—those unnoticed time-wasters, like small distractions, that quietly accumulate into major productivity drains. **In the next chapter** we'll dive into how we can effectively manage these hidden productivity killers, while creating the best environment we can for ourselves—based on research!



62% of emails received are not important and can be deleted in bulk.

—[Gallup](#)



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER



Watch:

[“Eat That Frog!: Get More of the Important Things Done - Today!”](#) by Brian Tracy helps you avoid procrastination and tackle the most challenging tasks first.

[Have ADHD? Read this instead!](#)



Read:

[The Pomodoro Technique](#) focuses on completing tasks in short bursts of activity, followed by breaks.



Try:

[Time Blocking](#) helps you plan your day into focused blocks for specific tasks, keeping you on track and making the most of your time.

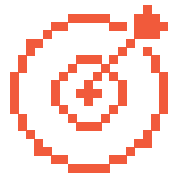


CHALLENGE FOR THIS CHAPTER



Take a moment now to reflect:

What would you do with an extra hour each day? Grab a pen and paper, or open a notes app, and **jot down three ways** you could use that time to enhance your life or work. Whether it's for boosting productivity, learning something new, or simply recharging, this exercise will help you visualize the potential impact of reclaiming that time.



CHAPTER 2

WHAT DISTRACTS, DETRACTS

Distractions are the number one enemy of any productive workflow, especially in our digital age.

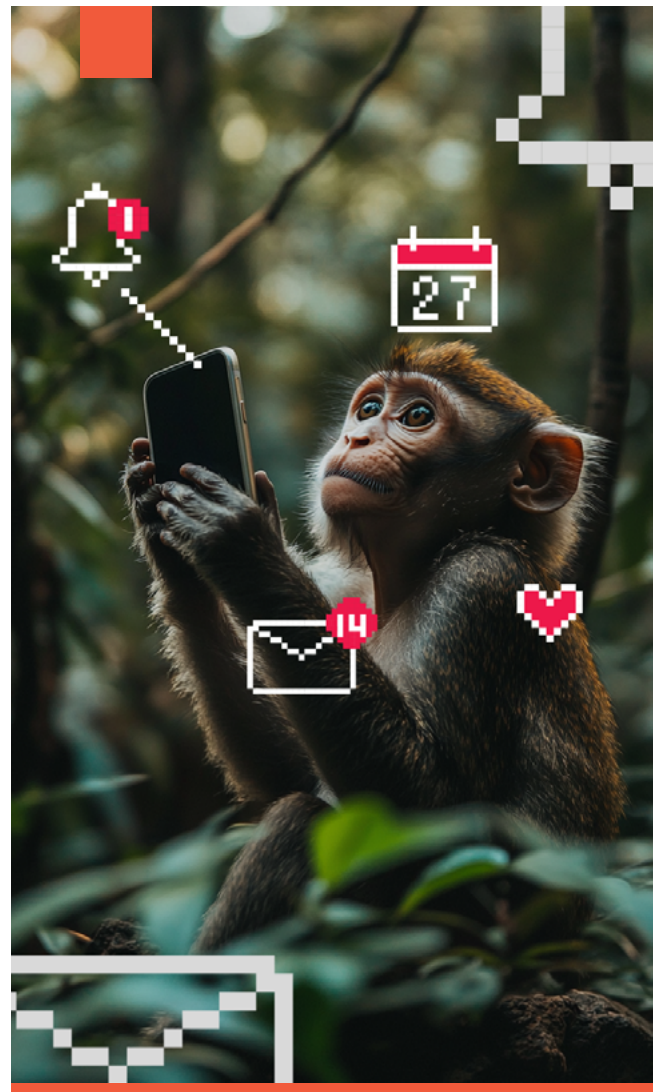
According to a report by DataReportal, we typically spend about 2.5 hours per day on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.⁸ Additionally, a Nielsen study found that we spend roughly 3 hours per day⁹ watching TV shows and movies on platforms like Netflix.*

There are various ways to handle these distractions, and what works best can vary from person to person. However, what about the less obvious distractions? Those that subtly chip away at our focus and productivity? These might include background noise, frequent email notifications, or even a cluttered workspace. Identifying and addressing these hidden distractions is just as crucial for maintaining a productive workflow.

Tackling distractions is crucial, so it's the first thing you want to address before getting into anything else. We won't go into detail here since these issues and their solutions have already been discussed extensively.

If you do want to dive deeper into this topic, we highly recommend “[Digital Minimalism](#)” by Cal Newport. It's a fantastic book about reclaiming your focus and living intentionally in a world full of digital distractions. Newport explores how to reduce digital clutter and use technology in a way that serves your goals without overwhelming your life.

** That is not to say that these activities are just distractions, as they're also a regular part of many people's free time!*



Every second, millions of emails are sent worldwide, yet on average, only a small percentage are actually read.

– [Zettasphere](#)

PREPARATIONS FOR PRODUCTIVITY

Great news—managing distractions is actually pretty simple, which means this chapter gets straight to the point. The four strategies below, as you'll soon see for yourself, will immediately add value to your workflow and boost your productivity. Plus, they're easy to implement!

1 Invest in Your Surroundings

If you can afford it, invest in a quality pair of noise-canceling headphones or earphones to block out distractions. A proper work setup can go a long way (it's tough to concentrate when you're uncomfortable, right?). A good chair with lumbar support will keep your back straight, help you stay focused, and ensure comfort during long work sessions. A standing desk can help reduce the strain of sitting all day and promote better posture and energy levels. Make sure your screen is at eye level to avoid neck discomfort, and ensure your workspace has adequate lighting to keep you focused and alert.

✓ Studies have shown that **workplace distractions can decrease productivity by up to 40% and increase errors by 27%**. Noise-canceling headphones can reduce surrounding noise by up to 30 decibels, significantly improving concentration and productivity.

✓ According to a study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), **54% of workers report back pain at some point in their careers**. Ergonomic chairs with lumbar support can reduce this risk by 50%, leading to less discomfort and fewer forced breaks during the day.

✓ The American Optometric Association states that **improper screen height can lead to Computer Vision Syndrome, which affects 50-90% of computer users**. Positioning your screen at eye level can reduce eye strain, headaches, and neck pain, boosting overall comfort and focus.

✓ Research from Cornell University found that **proper lighting can improve productivity by 15% and reduce errors by 30%**. Adequate lighting also reduces eye strain and fatigue, keeping you more alert and focused throughout the day.

✓ A study conducted by Texas A&M University found that **employees who used standing desks were about 45% more productive** than those who sat throughout the day. The study measured productivity in terms of the number of successful calls made and tasks completed, showing a significant increase in output for those using standing desks.



2 Tidy Up and Organize Your Physical Workspace

Whether it's your desk, room, or entire office, start by vacuuming the floor, wiping down surfaces, and putting away any loose items like spare change. Remove anything from your desk that isn't essential to your current tasks or could serve as a distraction. Finally, return all items to their proper places, ensuring everything is neat and in order.

- ✓ A study by the Princeton Neuroscience Institute found that a cluttered environment limits your brain's ability to focus and process information. **By tidying up, you can improve productivity by up to 40%.**
- ✓ A study by the International Facility Management Association (IFMA) found that **71% of employees feel more engaged in a clean and organized workspace.** This engagement leads to higher job satisfaction and overall better work performance.
- ✓ According to a survey by the National Association of Professional Organizers, **91% of respondents said they feel more in control and less stressed in a clean and organized workspace.** The same survey found that **the average person spends 4.3 hours per week searching for papers or other items they've misplaced.** Keeping your workspace organized can save you valuable time and reduce frustration.
- ✓ Research from the University of Minnesota suggests that a clean, organized workspace can **promote clearer thinking and enhance creativity by up to 20%.**

3 Now, Tackle Your Digital Workspace to Reduce Distractions

Start by decluttering your desktop—remove any unnecessary files, organize your folders, and set a clean, minimal background. Next, close any browser tabs that aren't directly related to your current tasks and shut down any open files or apps that you're not actively using to avoid the temptation to multitask.

- ✓ Research from Stanford University revealed that **multitasking can actually decrease productivity by as much as 40%.** By closing unnecessary tabs and apps, you reduce cognitive load and make it easier to concentrate on the task at hand.
- ✓ A study by Pace Productivity found that digital clutter, such as excessive files on the desktop or too many open browser tabs, **can reduce overall productivity by up to 20%.** Decluttering your digital workspace helps streamline your focus and improve efficiency.
- ✓ According to a study published in the journal "Human-Computer Interaction", users who minimize distractions in their digital workspace **completed tasks 50% faster than those who worked in cluttered environments.** By clearing your desktop and organizing your digital tools, you can significantly enhance your focus and task completion rate.
- ✓ Research published in "The Journal of Neuroscience" found that having too much digital clutter can impair your working memory, making it harder to retain and process information. By decluttering your digital environment, you **free up cognitive resources, allowing for better memory retention and information processing.**

4 And, Of Course, Manage Your Notifications

Everyone, and we mean everyone, wants your attention—and **this can be devastating to your productivity**. Muting notifications is one of the most effective (and easiest!) ways to stay focused and avoid distractions. To make it even simpler, set your device to automatically go into Do Not Disturb mode during work hours. Notifications can disrupt your flow, pulling you into unrelated activities like doom scrolling, checking unnecessary emails, or browsing random websites—making it hard to regain concentration and significantly hampering productivity.

✓ A study by Gloria Mark at the University of California, Irvine, found that it **takes an average of 23 minutes and 15 seconds to get back on task after an interruption**. This highlights how even brief notifications can severely disrupt your workflow and productivity.

✓ Research published in the journal “Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes” found that after switching tasks, a part of your attention remains on the previous task, **leading to reduced performance on the current task**. This is often exacerbated by frequent notifications pulling your focus in different directions.

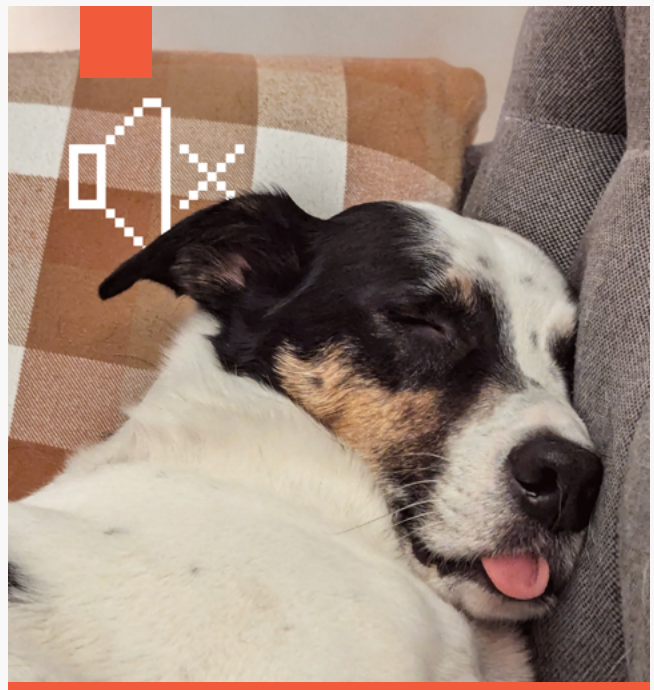
✓ A study by Deloitte revealed that **the average person checks their phone 47 times per day**, with younger people averaging even higher numbers. These frequent interruptions contribute to reduced productivity and increased stress.

✓ Research from Microsoft on workplace productivity showed that using tools like Do Not Disturb mode can **reduce distractions and significantly increase the time spent in deep work**, which is essential for completing complex tasks effectively.

Lastly, but Most Importantly, Get a Good Night’s Sleep!

Getting good sleep is crucial for your productivity and focus. According to sleep expert Dr. Matthew Walker, author of [“Why We Sleep”](#), sleep is not just a time for rest; it’s when your brain processes information, consolidates memories, and clears out toxins that build up during the day. **Without enough quality sleep**, your cognitive function, decision-making skills, and emotional regulation suffer, making it much harder to stay focused and productive.

Books not your thing? Here’s a [podcast](#)!





MENTAL HEALTH TIP

It's important to recognize that not all distractions come from the outside. Internal distractions—like stress or anxiety—can be just as disruptive to your focus and productivity. For some, being neurodivergent can also make managing attention or tasks more demanding. Managing these challenges isn't something you can simply switch off. When work feels overwhelming, it's tempting to keep pushing through and ignore your own needs. But remember: you can't pour from an empty cup.

Take time to stretch your legs, grab a snack (don't skip lunch!), drink water, and give yourself regular breaks. Beyond meeting your physical needs, think about ways to ease your mental load and recharge—whether that's taking a walk, talking to loved ones, or allowing yourself time off when needed.

And remember: productivity takes many forms. While striving to be productive is important, there will naturally be times when you're less productive—and that's okay. Don't feel pressured to measure your worth by short-term bursts of productivity, especially if it comes at the expense of your well-being and long-term impact.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER



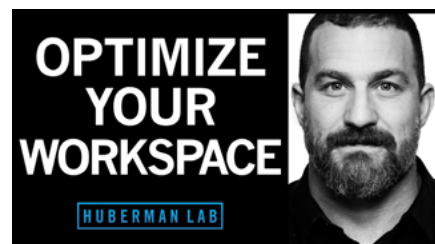
Watch:

[“A Powerful Antidote to Distraction”](#) provides tips to combat distraction and limit digital noise.



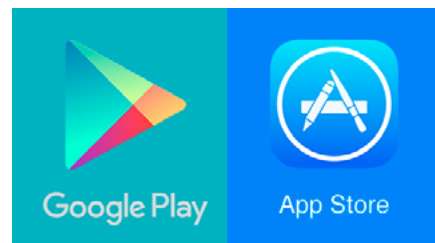
Listen:

[“Optimizing Workspace for Productivity, Focus, & Creativity”](#) by Dr. Andrew Huberman covers ways to set up your workspace for maximum impact!



Learn:

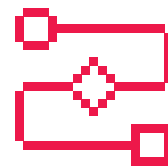
[Apple](#) and [Android](#) products offer built-in features that allow you to track time and block time-wasting apps for the rest of the day.



CHALLENGE FOR THIS CHAPTER



Take a week to track how you spend your time across different activities, like work, social media, and personal tasks—then identify any areas that may need adjusting. Use tools like [Toggl](#) or [RescueTime](#) to log your daily hours. Consider this your personal time audit!



CHAPTER 3

OPTIMIZE

Optimizing your workflow is like fine-tuning an engine; it's about making small adjustments that lead to big gains in performance.

For us, this can mean finding ways to streamline our tasks, reduce wasted time, and ultimately, increase our impact for animals without burning out.

There's a great example from Cal Newport that perfectly illustrates how small changes can lead to a big impact over time. Imagine adjusting the route of an airplane by just a few degrees—if you're flying from Los Angeles to New York and shift your heading by just 3.5 degrees, **you'll end up in Washington D.C. instead.** The difference is barely noticeable at takeoff, but when extended over the entire journey, it results in a destination hundreds of miles away.

As mentioned earlier, **we'll focus on a universal tool we all use daily: email.** The aim is to demonstrate how making small adjustments to just one tool you likely use every day can save time and increase productivity. Once you see the difference, you can apply these principles to other parts of your workflow by exploring each program's features and finding ways to maximize their time-saving potential.

Email is both a powerful tool and a **notorious time-sink.** If managed poorly, it can disrupt your day and sap your productivity. Let's explore some key optimizations that can unlock its time-saving potential.



Over-checking email wastes 21 minutes per day.

– [Gallup](#)

INBOX ZERO

Adopting the Mindset

Inbox Zero is a strategy aimed at maintaining an empty or nearly empty inbox. The idea is to deal with each email as it arrives by **either responding, delegating, deferring, archiving, or deleting it**—immediately. We’ve all felt overwhelmed by busy inboxes, which make it difficult to ground yourself on what you really need to work on. Flight confirmations, meeting invite responses, and marketing emails—Inbox Zero centers your workflow and puts it in a healthy state, where the only emails that remain are those that you can’t immediately take action on.

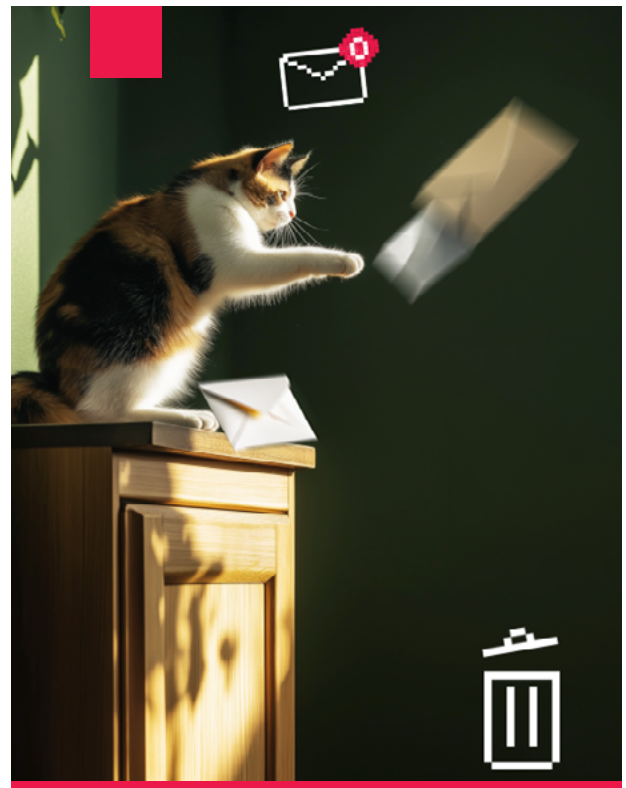
Email inboxes are so called because of their proximity in meaning to a real, physical inbox that would sit on every office worker’s desk. New items would arrive and physically occupy space in the inbox, awaiting the attention of the recipient. Once read, they were actioned or filed away. If papers were kept in the inbox it would soon overflow! **Just like a physical inbox, emails should never be retained permanently.**

Equally, having an email in your inbox does not make it easier to find—by archiving the email, or categorizing it and filing it away, the information is never lost, but rather not permanently presented to you. In today’s digital age, where emails flood our inboxes, **Inbox Zero is a mindset shift.** It redefines email management as a dynamic action center where every message is promptly addressed, rather than a passive storage space.

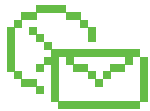
YOUR ACTION ITEM

Aim for Inbox Zero, or get as close as possible! Start archiving or deleting emails from your inbox to clear the clutter. Depending on how full your inbox is, this process could take anywhere from an hour to several days.

No judgment if you’re one of those with 1,000+ unread email notifications! Most email clients make it easy to archive all emails in just a few clicks. For example, in Gmail, click the checkbox at the top left, then select “All conversations that match this search,” and archive them all. It may take a few minutes to process—but it’ll get done!



QUICK TIPS FOR HANDLING EMAIL



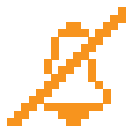
1. Set Specific Times for Checking Email

Instead of checking emails throughout the day, designate specific times (e.g., morning, noon, and end of day) for emails.



2. Use the 2-Minute Rule*

If an email takes less than 2 minutes to respond to or handle, do it right away. Quick actions prevent small tasks from piling up.



3. Turn Off Email Notifications

Disable notifications to avoid constant interruptions. Checking email at set intervals lets you focus without distraction.



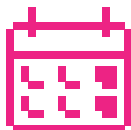
4. Archive, Don't Delete

Archive emails instead of deleting them. Archiving keeps your inbox clear while preserving old messages for future reference.



5. Try “OHIO” (Only Handle It Once)

When you open an email, try to take immediate action on it—whether that's replying, delegating, or archiving.



6. Set Weekend Boundaries

Avoid checking work email on weekends to maintain work-life balance and come back to work refreshed.

** Note that this approach may not be suitable for roles that require constant email monitoring, such as customer service, administrative staff, or personal assistants.*

EMAIL TEMPLATES

Never Write the Same Thing Twice

If you often send the same type of email responses, creating templates can be a huge time-saver. Tools like Gmail's canned responses allow you to quickly insert these pre-written messages, making your email process much more efficient. They're just a click away, meaning your email responses can take just seconds unless they require more detail.

A good rule of thumb: if you find yourself sending the same kind of email three times within two weeks, it's time to make a template for it!

Let's get started!

Step 1 Identify Common Emails

First, pinpoint the types of emails you send frequently. These could include:

- Responses to frequently asked questions
- Standard replies to inquiries
- Follow-up emails after meetings
- Introduction or welcome emails
- Event invitations or reminders
- Project status updates
- Customer service responses or issues
- Payment or invoice reminders
- Proposing times for meetings or follow-ups
- Thank-you emails after meetings
- Feedback requests

Step 2 Draft Your Template

Write out your response as you normally would. Include placeholders for any details you'll need to customize for each recipient. Here's an example of a template David uses for the [FAST Community](#), as people often sign up using personal emails instead of their organizational ones:



Hi [Name],

I wanted to follow up on your application to join FAST. Unfortunately, we're not accepting personal emails at this time, but I'll be sure to inform you if that policy changes in the future. In the meantime, feel free to sign up again using this link with your professional work email.

Apologies for the trouble— hope you have a great day!

David

Step 3 Save Your New Template

Most email platforms offer built-in tools for managing templates. Here's how to do it in some popular email services:

Gmail:



1. Open Gmail and click on the gear icon to access Settings.
2. Navigate to the Advanced tab and enable Templates.
3. Compose a new email and type your template.
4. Click on the three dots in the bottom-right corner of the compose window, select Templates, then Save draft as template.
5. Give your template a name and save it.

Outlook:



1. Open Outlook and click on New Email.
2. Type out your template email.
3. Click on File > Save As.
4. In the Save as type dropdown, select Outlook Template (*.oft).
5. Name your template and save it.

Apple Mail:



1. Open Apple Mail and start a new message.
2. Write your template email.
3. Close the draft and save it.
4. Drag the saved draft into a specific folder to use as a template.

Template Tip: To keep your templates organized:

Name them clearly based on their use.

- Group similar templates together if your email service allows.
- If it doesn't, tag them in the template name! [FAST], [VH], [Violet], etc.
- Regularly review and delete outdated templates.

Step 4 Insert Your New Template as Needed

Gmail:



1. Open Gmail and start composing a new email.
2. Click on the three dots at the bottom-right corner of the compose window.
3. Select “Templates” from the menu.
4. Choose “Insert template” and pick the template you want to use.

For more details, check Google’s [Template Guide](#).

Outlook:



1. Open Outlook and start a new mail.
2. Open “New Items” > “More Items” > “Choose Form”.
3. Select “User Templates in File System” and pick your template.

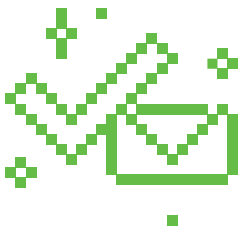
For more details, check Outlook’s [Template Guide](#).

Apple Mail:



1. Open Apple Mail.
2. Go to the folder where you saved your template.
3. Templates are usually saved as drafts or in a specific folder you created.
4. Double-click the saved template to open it.
5. Make any necessary edits to customize the email for your current use.
6. Once edited, send the email as usual.

For more details, check Apple Mail’s [Template Guide](#).



Congratulations on making your first template!

Handling over 20 emails a day used to literally take around 2-3 hours (We counted!), but with Gmail’s “Canned Responses” feature, this has been cut down to just 15-30 minutes. Hidden and tucked away under the three-dot menu, **this tool is a massive time-saver.**

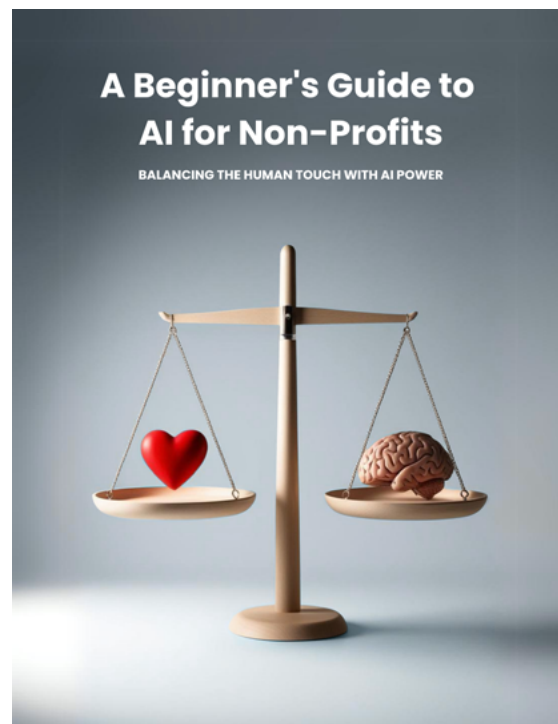
WHAT ABOUT AI?

While this ebook focuses on traditional email strategies, it's worth noting that AI tools like ChatGPT can be game-changers for productivity—not just for email, but in so many other areas too!

For a comprehensive introduction to AI in the nonprofit sector, consider exploring [“A Beginner's Guide to AI for Non-Profits”](#) by Kyle Behrend, founder of [AI Impact Hub](#). This guide offers valuable insights into leveraging AI for your organization.

Behrend also produces monthly videos discussing the latest AI features to boost productivity. You can access the guide and other resources at [AI Impact Hub](#)!

Additionally, check out [Superhuman](#) or [Hey](#), which offer more AI features to streamline email and workflow. For more specific AI email tools and services, see the [Resources](#) section at the end of this book.



OTHER TIPS AND TRICKS

Important: We'll be using Gmail as an example for the features, tips, and tricks below, but almost all modern email clients offer similar or identical features, often with slightly different names.

Feature: Enable the “Send and Archive” Button

Gmail's “Archive and Send” setting helps keep your inbox clear by archiving emails right after you reply. If the email is important, you'll remember it, and it will come back when someone replies. If there's no reply, it probably wasn't urgent. That said, if you're worried that you'll forget about the email, you can also enable Gmail's follow-up option to bring emails back after a few days if there's no response.

Remember, there's plenty of evidence that Inbox Zero can reduce stress and feelings of being overwhelmed while boosting productivity—**this feature may seem small, but it helps a lot!**

Enable “Send and Archive”:

1. Go to Gmail settings.
2. Under the “General” tab, find “Send and Archive.”
3. Choose “Show ‘Send & Archive’ button in reply.”

Enable Follow-Up Reminders:

1. In settings, enable the “Nudges” option under the “General” tab.
2. This will automatically bring emails back to your inbox if there's no reply after a few days.



Only 8% of colleagues expect a response to an email in less than an hour.

– [Gallup](#)

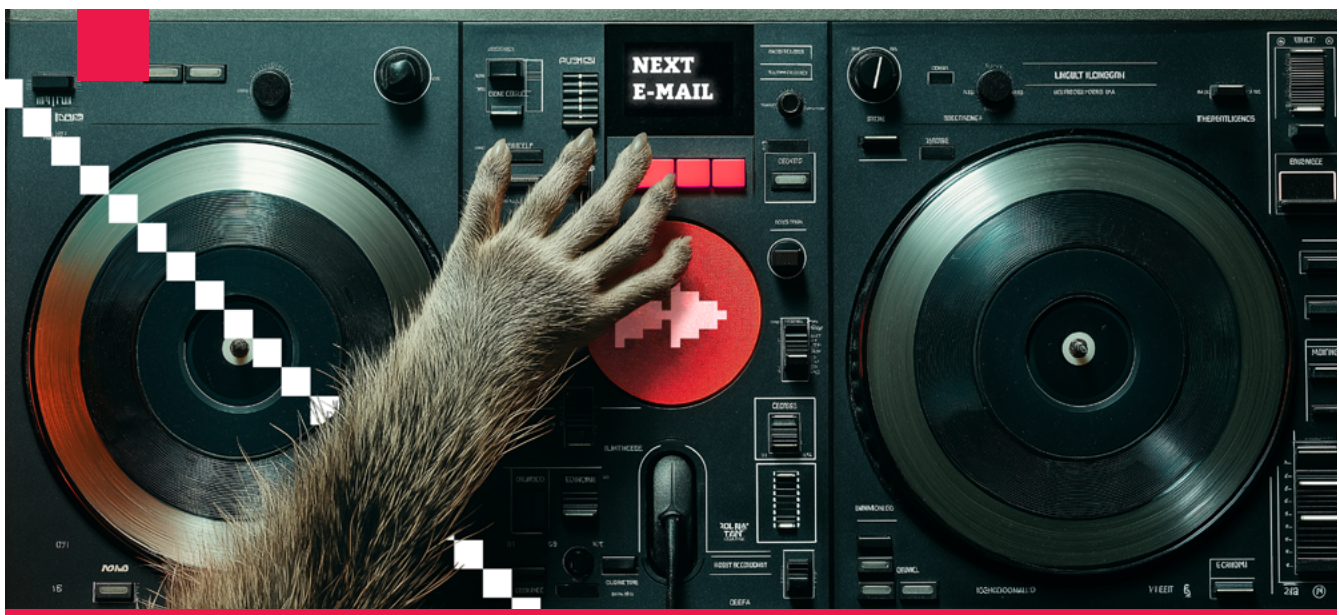
Feature: Gmail's "Show Next Email After Send"

Gmail's "Auto-Advance" feature is a game-changer for efficient email management. After sending or archiving an email, it automatically opens the next one in your inbox, allowing you to stay focused without returning to the inbox view. This continuous flow helps you handle emails one by one without interruption, driving you closer to achieving Inbox Zero. It also keeps your momentum going by presenting the next task immediately, preventing the feeling of being "done" after just one email.

Research supports this approach! Studies show that task switching—moving from one task to another—can decrease productivity due to the cognitive effort needed to refocus. By advancing directly to the next email, "Auto-Advance" reduces the need to switch back to the inbox, helping you stay on task and maintain focus.

Enable Show Next Email:

1. **Open Gmail:** Go to your Gmail account on your computer.
2. **Access Settings:** Click on the gear icon in the top right corner and select "See all settings."
3. **Find the Feature:** Under the "Advanced" tab, locate "Auto-advance."
4. **Enable It:** Click "Enable" next to "Auto-advance" and then save your changes at the bottom of the page.
5. **Once enabled, go to the "General" tab in settings** to choose what action to take after handling an email—whether to move to the next or previous email or return to the conversation list.



Bonus Tip: Unsubscribe to Survive

As a marketing tool, email is nowadays considered to be secondary to other more modern forms of marketing, such as Facebook or Instagram ads. However, the email marketing industry is still projected to facilitate **up to \$14 billion in revenue** in 2024, confirming its place as a steady means to advertise to consumers around the world.

With the average email account thought to be 8-10 years old, this likely means many years of accumulating subscriptions to various newsletters. Either you signed up to a newsletter in order to secure a 10% discount on a holiday gift, or you shared your email address when you signed up for a gym membership. It is thought that the average email account receives up to 10,000 marketing emails a year—that's 10,000 notifications, vibrations of your cell phone, **and 10,000 distractions.**

The idea of manually unsubscribing to each newsletter might sound tedious and time consuming, but don't worry, we have a solution!

With the help of the free [Unroll.me](#) tool, you can quickly and easily unsubscribe from almost any marketing lists, freeing up space in your inbox and in your mind.

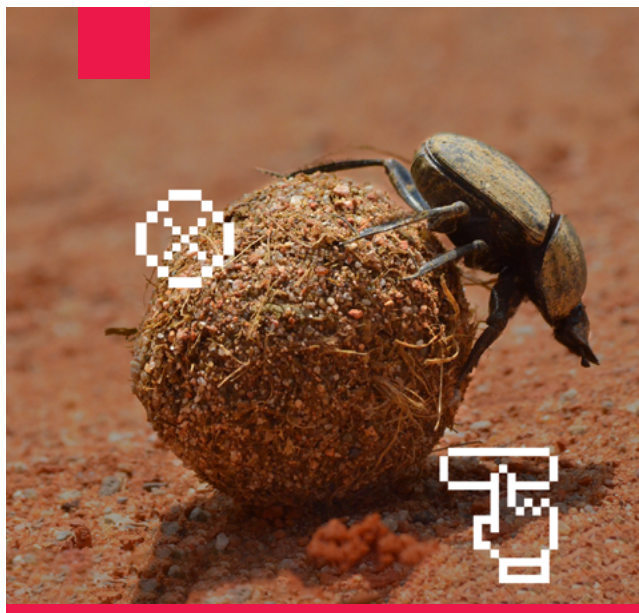
Use Unroll.me to quickly unsubscribe from almost any marketing lists

1. First, visit [Unroll.me](#) and sign up
2. Connect your email accounts

Note: While [Unroll.me](#) focuses specifically on email management, you'll be surprised at the wide range of external tools and services available to boost your productivity. Chapter 8 will list many of these. In the meantime, don't hesitate to use Google or your favorite AI tool to find solutions to any workflow problems you encounter.

That's it for this chapter!

The goal was to show how spending just 15-30 minutes setting up and using these email features can be a game-changer for your productivity and impact. To make things even better, as you'll see below, this isn't limited to just email.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER



Watch:

[“How to Achieve Inbox Zero”](#) goes over both Inbox Zero and a few other email productivity tips.



Listen:

[“Email Productivity for Everyone Who Hates Email”](#) offers strategies to process all of your emails in under 10



Learn:

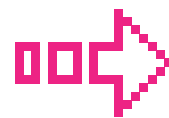
[Email history in a nutshell](#) may be less practical than the resources above, but you might still find this blog an interesting read!



CHALLENGE FOR THIS CHAPTER



Most of the tools you use daily have hidden features—designed for those who dig deeper to optimize their workflows. Apply this mindset to every service and part of your workflow, and you’ll quickly become a productivity powerhouse. **Today, pick one tool you use regularly**, explore its features and settings, and see what you can optimize!



CHAPTER 4

AUTOMATE

Similarly to optimizing, automating is all about saving time. But what does automating really mean? Human-like robots furiously typing away on your keyboard and running around town to get things done? Not exactly!

We're going to dive into a few tools related to email that can take over repetitive tasks you're already doing. Remember the saying, 'Money can't buy time'? Well, that's only partly true—you can invest in services to automate and delegate tasks, giving you back the time you would otherwise spend on them. While this won't add more hours to your life (and it won't make you live longer), it will allow you to reclaim that time to use however you like.

Filter This, Buddy! *Filter Your Emails*

Let's automate some of those emails out of our inboxes and into the proper places.

Gmail's filters are powerful tools that help you manage your inbox by automatically sorting incoming emails based on criteria you set. You can create filters to automatically **forward, label, archive, delete, or mark emails as read**, depending on their sender, subject, or keywords.

Forwarding engages both automation and delegation! Forwarding filters might be the most powerful automation (and delegation!) tool we can think of for email.

Here are some examples of the filters David uses:



One useful filter I have set up forwards any receipts, payment confirmations, or invoices directly to a separate inbox that our tax accountant can access.

This way, I never have to see these emails cluttering my primary inbox, and when tax time rolls around, our accountant has immediate access to all the latest documents **without me needing to sift through my inbox**. It simplifies finding receipts and invoices and keeps everything organized and ready when needed.

This works beautifully for any type of forwarding. In my case, I also use it to delegate: bug reports get forwarded directly to the developers, and Squarespace-related requests go to our website team. If you're in any kind of leadership role within the movement, you know that forwarding emails is a constant, repetitive task. Automatic forwarding not only saves time, but ensures that the right people receive important emails instantly—**allowing them to jump in and get to work without delay**.

I also get emails frequently sent to the wrong address, but with automatic forwarding, they're instantly redirected to the correct inbox. For example, if someone emails me about Violet Studios at my Vegan Hacktivists address, it's automatically forwarded to my Violet Studios email—no manual sorting needed!

Let's Get Started!

Here's a quick guide on creating automatic filters for your inbox. Note that Gmail refers to these as "filters," while Outlook and Apple Mail call them "rules," but they function similarly to keep your inbox organized.

Gmail: Create a Filter



1. Open Gmail and go to the Search bar at the top.
2. Click on the sliders icon (to the right of the search bar) to open advanced search options.
3. Set your filter criteria (e.g., emails from a specific sender or with certain words).
4. At the bottom of the search box, click Create filter.
5. Choose the action you want Gmail to take (e.g., automatically label, archive, or delete).
6. Click Create filter to save your settings.

For more details, check [Google's Filters Guide](#).

Outlook: Create a Rule



1. Open Outlook and go to your Inbox.
2. Right-click on an email that matches the type you want to filter and select Rules > Create Rule.
3. In the Create Rule dialog box, set the conditions (e.g., specific sender or subject).
4. Choose what action Outlook should take (e.g., move to a specific folder, mark as read).
5. Click OK to save the rule.
6. You may be prompted to run the rule on current messages to apply it right away.

For more details, check [Outlook's Rules Guide](#).

Apple Mail: Create a Rule



1. Open Apple Mail and go to the Mail menu at the top.
2. Select Preferences and click on the Rules tab.
3. Click Add Rule.
4. Name the rule and set the conditions (e.g., sender, subject, or content).
5. Choose the action you want Apple Mail to take (e.g., move to a mailbox, flag, or delete).
6. Click OK to save the rule, then apply it to existing emails if prompted.

For more details, check [Apple's Rules guide](#).

Delete or Archive Irrelevant Emails

If you're anything like us, you've probably signed up for countless services over the years and now find yourself inundated with "Terms of Service" or "Privacy Policy" emails (alongside plenty of other low-priority messages).

Here are a few more examples from David on how to declutter your inbox:



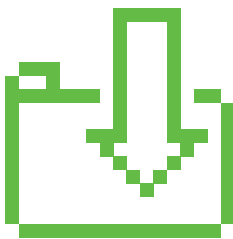
Personally, I have no desire to read privacy policy updates from my old Tumblr account that I haven't logged into for over eight years. If you feel the same, **Delete or Archive** filters can save you a lot of time. Setting it up takes just five seconds and will automatically clear hundreds of these irrelevant emails from your inbox.

Examples to search and filter for include: Terms of Service, Privacy Policy, Special Offer, Account Update, Welcome to [Service], or Your Weekly Digest in the subject line.* Other low-priority emails could include routine notifications from social media platforms or promotional offers.

But how much time does this actually save? Beyond just the minor clicks or swipes to delete, the true advantage is cutting down the number of irrelevant email notifications fighting for your attention.

One notification, however small or irrelevant, can break your focus, distract you, and impact your productivity. Plus, fewer unread emails lead to a smaller unread count and, more importantly, less stress. Reducing these small, repetitive actions, can lower the mental fatigue that builds up from all the little tasks and interactions you face each day.

Creating these filters doesn't take long, but the payoff is huge. When you automate your inbox with filters, you're essentially building a self-sorting system that helps you prioritize what really needs your attention. After setting things up, you'll notice that your inbox feels lighter, more organized, and less stressful to manage.



Instructions: Creating delete or archive filters is the same as the guide above, so just scroll back up if you need a reminder! Simply select "delete" or "archive" as the action when setting up the filter or rule to manage unwanted emails effectively.

** Keep in mind some emails might be important, so filter carefully!*

LABEL YOUR EMAILS

Labels are incredibly useful for organizing—and while you might not see the immediate need to categorize emails now, you'll thank yourself later. Setting up labels early on means that when you need to sort and search through your inbox down the line, everything is already in place, making it quick and easy to find exactly what you're looking for. **Let's get started!**

Step 1 Identify Labels to Use

Here are some example labels that you might find useful:

- **Important** – For emails from important contacts, clients, funders.
- **Follow up** – For emails that need a response or action later.
- **Finances** – To collect financial emails like bills, invoices, and bank statements.
- **Read Later** – For non-urgent newsletters, articles, or reports to check later.
- **Receipts** – For purchase confirmations and payment receipts.
- **Personal** – For emails that are non-work related.
- **Events & Tickets** – For event confirmations, tickets, and reservations.
- **Projects** – For project-specific emails; you can create sub-labels by project name.
- **Travel** – For travel related emails like flights, hotels, and itineraries.
- **HR & Payroll** – For work emails like HR documents, payroll info, and internal notices.
- **Learning & Development** – For webinars, course updates, and training-related emails.
- **Social Media** – For updates from social platforms.
- **Updates & Newsletters** – For regular updates from companies or organizations.
- **Bug Reports** – If you handle tech support, a label for tracking bug report emails.
- **Job Opportunities** – For job alerts or freelance opportunities.
- **Weekly Reports** – For scheduled reports you receive regularly.
- **Tasks** – For emails that include to-do items or tasks.
- **Feedback & Reviews** – For feedback from clients or performance reviews.
- **Reminders** – For emails that serve as reminders for appointments or deadlines.
- **Favorite** – For emails that you want to reference often, several times a year.

Note: Gmail's tabs—such as “Primary,” “Social,” and “Promotions”—do a good job of sorting common email types automatically. However, labeling with filters offer even greater control for customizing your inbox: as an example, you can move certain newsletters into a “Read Later” folder within the “Promotions” tab, letting you create subcategories that go beyond what Gmail's tabs can do on their own.

Step 2 Create Your Labels

Gmail:



1. Open Gmail and click on the gear icon in the top right corner to access Settings.
2. Go to the Labels tab.
3. Scroll down and click on Create new label.
4. Enter a name for your label and, if desired, choose to nest it under an existing label.
5. Click Create to save the label.

For more details, check [Google's Label Guide](#).

Outlook:



1. Open Outlook and go to your Inbox.
2. Right-click on Folders in the sidebar and select New Folder.
3. Name your new folder (e.g., "Work" or "Personal").
4. Click Enter to save the folder, which you can now use to categorize emails.

For more details, check [Outlook's Folder Guide](#).

Apple Mail:



1. Open Apple Mail and go to the Mailboxes sidebar.
2. Click on Mailbox in the top menu and select New Mailbox.
3. Choose where to create the mailbox (e.g., under "On My Mac" or in a specific account).
4. Name your mailbox and click OK to create it.

For more details, check [Apple's Mailbox Guide](#).

Note: If you use Apple Mail or Outlook, you may have noticed they don't use "labels" like Gmail. Instead, they organize emails into mailboxes (folders), which work similarly by grouping emails into categories. You can create new folders and apply them to specific emails to stay organized, but they don't have the flexibility of Gmail's multiple-label system, where a single email can carry multiple labels at once.



Concise emails—100 words or fewer—are most likely to get a response.

—[Boomerang App](#)

Step 3 Categorize Your Emails

Finally, let's apply your new labels and begin organizing your inbox!

Gmail:



1. Open Gmail and go to your Inbox.
2. Select the email(s) you want to label by checking the box next to each one.
3. Click the label icon at the top of the page.
4. Choose the label you want to apply from the dropdown list.
5. Click Apply to add the label to your selected email(s).

Outlook:



1. Open Outlook and locate the email you want to organize.
2. Right-click on the email and select Move.
3. Choose the appropriate folder from the list or select Other Folder to see all options.
4. Click on the folder to move the email into it.
5. Alternatively, you can drag and drop the email directly into the desired folder.

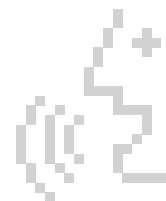
Apple Mail:



1. Open Apple Mail and go to the email you want to categorize.
2. Right-click on the email and choose Move to.
3. Select the mailbox (folder) you want to apply from the list.
4. The email will automatically move to that mailbox.
5. You can also drag and drop the email into the specific mailbox in the sidebar.



Congratulations on creating your first set of labels!



You Still Type, Bro? *Voice Dictation*

Having spent much of our childhoods and adult lives with devices in hand or keyboards in front of us, we've picked up some speed with typing over the years. However, we understand that this doesn't come naturally to everyone.

One of the biggest bottlenecks in getting email done is the act of typing itself.

Not only is typing error prone, but also the QWERTY keyboard layout is specifically designed to slow you down—a relic of the days of the typewriter, where machines would jam if the typist were too fast. It is categorically not optimized for typing efficiency in a modern context. A study carried out by the US Navy almost one hundred years ago tells us that the more efficient keyboard layout, known as DVORAK, would see a 10-30% increase in typing speed.

However, let's not suggest that changing your keyboard layout will speed up your typing by 30% tomorrow or even next week. Achieving this boost in typing speed would require for each of us hundreds of hours of learning and adaptation.

Instead, let's consider a different way of writing emails. With few exceptions, we can broadly speak faster than we can type. Voice dictation has been around for several decades; never has it been so apt at correctly processing your voice as today. Both Windows and Mac put voice dictation just a keyboard shortcut away (Windows Key + H, or the microphone button on Mac), meaning you can enter the fast lane of email writing with ease. Granted, it will at times misinterpret you, but there's no doubt that it can be a boon to getting your point across.

Activate Voice Dictation:

- 1. Windows:** Press Windows Key + H.
Mac: Click the microphone button on your keyboard or in the menu.
iPhone: Open your email app, tap the microphone icon on your keyboard.
Android: Open your email app, tap the microphone icon on your keyboard.
- 2. Speak Your Email:** Once activated, start speaking clearly. Your device will convert your voice to text in real-time.
- 3. Review and Edit:** Voice dictation may occasionally misinterpret words, so give your message a quick review and fix any errors.



You'll Get It When You Get It! *Schedule to Send*

Schedule Send is a feature that allows you to delay and, more specifically, schedule the time at which your emails are sent. How does this save you time? It doesn't, at least directly. But by using schedule send, you decide when an email is received, and in doing so, you control when it hits the top of their inbox. **This can speed up responses to your email.**

Schedule send, on the one hand, can be used to avoid disturbing your recipient outside of hours or during their holiday, whilst, on the other hand, it also allows you to protect your own time, too. How many times have you sent an email, only to receive a response sooner than expected, pulling your focus back to a topic you thought you were temporarily done with just moments ago?

By scheduling your email to be sent a few hours later—or perhaps at the end of your day—you can avoid rapid-fire back-and-forth on a topic that might not be urgent.

Set Up Schedule Send:

Gmail: Compose your email, click the arrow next to Send, and choose Schedule Send. Select your desired date and time.

Outlook: Compose your email, go to Options > Delay Delivery, then choose your preferred send time and close the window.

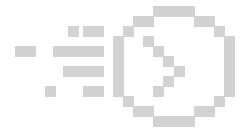
Apple Mail (with macOS Ventura or newer): Compose your email, click the arrow next to Send, select Send Later, and choose a time.



Every day, over 360 billion emails are projected to be sent worldwide—that's about 45 emails for every person on Earth!

– [Statista](#)





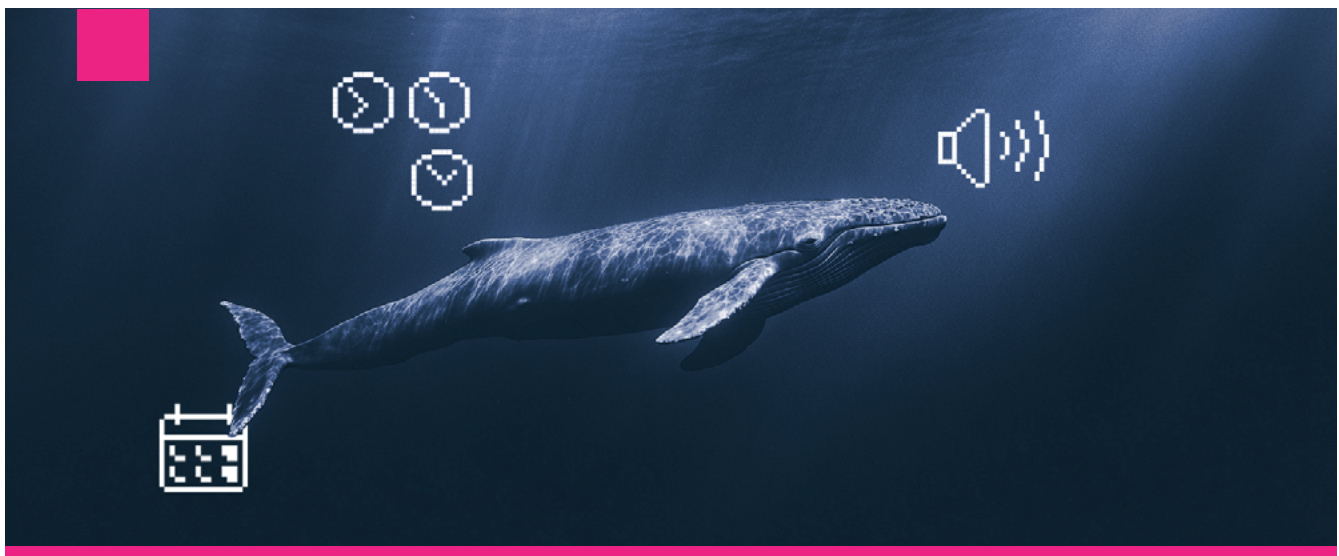
Get in the Zone, Timezone! *Scheduling Your Meetings*

Scheduling meetings with colleagues should be straightforward, as you can usually see their availability and pick a time that works for both of you. However, when working with clients or people that are external to your organization, how can you most effectively schedule a time to meet?

Historically such a task would involve several emails suggesting times convenient to both parties, often requiring clarification of timezone, date or even AM and PM. **However, several alternatives exist that prevent the need for this admin nightmare.** For years, [Calendly](#) has allowed you to share a simple link that shares your availability, allowing the recipient to book a slot that works for you both. Calendly is integrated with your calendar management software such as Google Calendar or Outlook, meaning PTO, national holidays and your own meetings are unavailable to book over.

More recently, Google has integrated this into the [Google Calendar offering](#). With a few clicks, you can choose times when you're available, and you can even add buffer time in between meetings, set a maximum number of meetings per day, or limit how early or last-minute people can book a meeting with you.

It can sometimes be appropriate for this link to be available in your email signature, allowing people to book without you having to ask them to, or without you having to manually share the booking link. However, this could also lead you to receiving meeting invites from people that you might rather not meet, or handle communication with a different means. **The choice is yours**, as you can cancel or reschedule any meeting that anyone schedules with you.



Note: [Zapier](#) and [IFTTT](#) are fantastic rule-based automation tools that deserve mention in any chapter about automation! That said, we don't recommend them unless you consider yourself an advanced user. Both services often require a significant amount of effort to set up and can be tricky for the average user to navigate. Additionally, many of their most useful features are behind paid plans, which may limit their appeal for free-tier users.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER



Watch:

For advanced users, watch “[AI Automation: Complete Beginners Guide using Zapier](#).”



Discover:

The [r/Automate community](#) on Reddit includes over 135 thousand enthusiasts sharing tips and asking questions!



Try:

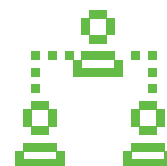
Automate your note-taking with [Otter.ai](#) to record your meetings, transcribe the conversation, and summarize the key points.



CHALLENGE FOR THIS CHAPTER



Now that you’ve got the basics of automation down, it’s time to put them into action! **This challenge has two parts:** First, set up a new email filter to automatically sort, label, or archive certain types of emails, like newsletters or receipts. Then, use voice dictation for your next three emails and see how much faster you can clear your inbox!



CHAPTER 5

DELEGATE

The Art of Letting Go

Delegation is a powerful tool, yet one of the most underutilized strategies in productivity. Many of us fall into the trap of thinking we need to do everything ourselves to ensure it's done right. But here's the truth: you don't have to—and you shouldn't. The ability to delegate effectively is not just about handing off tasks; it's about freeing up your time to focus on the things that truly matter—whether that be your mental health, maximizing your impact for animals, or both!

In the high-stakes world of animal advocacy, your time is precious. You're likely juggling multiple projects, campaigns, and deadlines. By holding onto tasks that someone else could handle, you're not only overloading yourself but also missing opportunities to scale your impact.

Delegating effectively means assigning the right tasks to the right people. It's about trusting others to take on responsibilities and knowing that by doing so, you're empowering them to contribute more meaningfully to the cause.



IMPORTANT NOTE

It's important to acknowledge that not everyone may have the privilege to delegate. In some cases, your team might already be stretched thin, and adding more to their plate could cause undue stress. **Delegation should never be about offloading your work at the expense of others.** Instead, it's about strategic collaboration—ensuring that tasks are assigned in a way that **leverages everyone's strengths without overwhelming anyone.** Always consider the workload and capacity of those you're delegating to, and aim for balance and fairness in your approach.



It can take people up to 23 minutes to recover after an interruption, such as checking email or notifications.

– [Gallup](#)

When to Delegate

Knowing *when* to delegate is just as important as knowing *what* to delegate. Here are some key indicators that it's time to pass the baton:

- **Repetitive Tasks:** If a task is repetitive, it's a prime candidate for delegation.
- **Tasks Outside Your Scope:** If a task doesn't need your specific expertise, delegate it to someone else. This frees up your time to focus on tasks that only you can handle, making your work more impactful.
- **Tasks Outside Your Strengths:** While it's always valuable to learn new skills and work on improving in different areas, it's important to recognize when a task might be better suited for someone else. For tasks that don't play to your strengths, consider handing them off to someone with more skill or efficiency in that area. This way, the work gets done at a higher quality, while you concentrate on what you excel at.
- **Time-Consuming Tasks:** If a task eats up a significant portion of your day but isn't high-priority, delegate it.
- **Training Opportunities:** Delegation can also serve as a great way to train and empower your team, allowing them to grow and develop new skills.

How to Delegate

Remember what we said: delegating isn't just about offloading work; it's about strategic assignment. Here's how to do it effectively:

- 1 **Identify the Task:** Determine which tasks can be handed off. Start small with simple, routine tasks before moving on to more complex responsibilities.
- 2 **Choose the Right Person:** Consider the skills, experience, and current workload of your team members. Match tasks to those who have the capacity and capability to handle them.
- 3 **Clearly Communicate:** Provide clear instructions and expectations. Explain the importance of the task and how it contributes to the larger goal. Make sure deadlines are understood and agreed upon (think of draft deadlines too, if applicable!). Ensure that the person you're delegating to has all the tools, information, and support they need to complete the task successfully.
- 4 **Trust and Let Go:** Once you've delegated, step back. Micromanaging defeats the purpose of delegation. Trust your team to do their job and give them the space to complete the task.
- 5 **Follow Up:** Check in periodically, not to micromanage but to offer support and ensure the task is progressing as planned. Provide feedback once the task is completed to help your team improve.

BONUS TIP

If a team member misses a deadline, it might feel natural to give them some time before following up. However, delaying can send the wrong message, making the task—or worse, the team member's efforts—seem unimportant or not counted on. Checking in promptly reinforces accountability, boosts morale by showing their work is valued and well-needed, and helps catch issues early to prevent bigger problems.

Let's see all five of these steps in action in this imaginary scenario:

You've been proofreading the organization's monthly newsletter for the past year, but you realize this task could be delegated to free up your time for more strategic responsibilities. You identify Sarah, a communications associate with a keen eye for detail, as the ideal person to take on this task.

After discussing the importance of maintaining the newsletter's quality and setting a deadline for completion, you provide her with the necessary resources, including a style guide, a proofreading checklist, and access to Grammarly. **With clear instructions and expectations set, you step back and trust Sarah to handle the task, resisting the urge to micromanage.**

A few days before the deadline, you check in with Sarah to **offer support and ensure everything is on track**. When the task is completed, you briefly review the newsletter to see how she managed the task and are pleased with the results.

You provide positive feedback and suggest minor improvements for the future. After this successful handoff, you trust Sarah to continue handling the newsletter without the need for further check-ins, fully confident in her ability to manage the task independently.

This approach not only frees up your time but also empowers Sarah to take on more responsibility, **enhancing her skills and contributing to the team's overall productivity.**

In the end, effective delegation is a game-changer. It allows you to focus on what truly matters, boosts productivity, and helps your team grow by giving them opportunities to develop new skills and take on more responsibility. By sharing the workload, you not only free up your own time for strategic tasks but also reduce stress and prevent burnout, leading to a healthier work-life balance. Mastering the art of delegation ultimately strengthens your entire team and sets you up for greater success.



69% of people skim email newsletters, whilst only 19% read thoroughly—the rest are glanced or not read at all.

—[NNgroup](#)



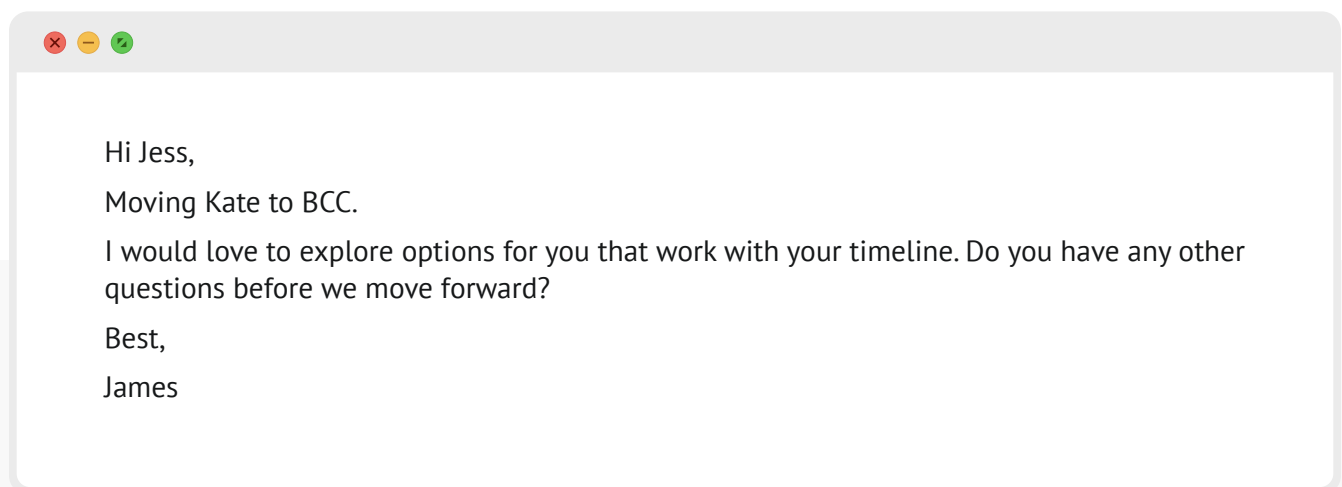
BCC: The Magic of Exclusion

Email is a core part of workplace communication, with the average worker checking their inbox 40-50 times a day. If each check takes about a minute, that adds up to nearly 22 working days—**or almost an entire month**—per year spent just on email. While some people try to manage this by batching emails at set times, this approach can lead to missed urgent communications, especially in roles where instant messaging isn't the norm.

Given how ingrained email is in our work culture, it's worth reconsidering how much time we spend on it. Email threads can quickly grow, involving more people with each response and creating unnecessary notifications for your team.

This is where BCC (blind carbon copy) comes in handy. You might not realize it, but BCCing is a way of delegating that ensures the right people are involved in the conversation. As we mentioned before, effective delegation means assigning the right tasks to the right people, but it can also work the other way—removing unnecessary participants.

When you BCC someone, they'll receive that specific email, but any replies or follow-ups on the thread won't reach them. This can be helpful when you want to update someone without keeping them on the entire conversation, saving them from unnecessary notifications once their input is complete. This approach helps free up their time, allowing them to focus on more relevant tasks and responsibilities.



Using BCC strategically can also empower teams. For example, a team can remove their boss from the email chain once key details are settled, allowing them to coordinate without feeling watched over, or worse, micromanaged. While BCC saves time for others, it's important to use it with proper etiquette—**announce when you're BCC'ing someone** to ensure transparency and avoid misunderstandings.



Employees waste an average of 2 hours per day recovering from interruptions.

– [Productivity Report](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER



Read:

[“Let It Go!: How to \(Finally\) Master Delegation & Scale Freedom Across Your Organization”](#) by Emily Morgan.



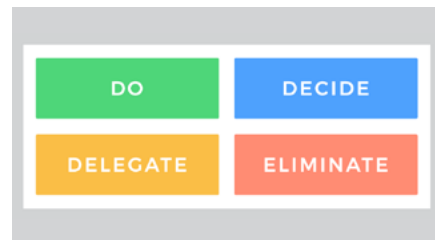
Watch:

Two videos for this chapter that summarize and expand on delegation: [“The Key Management Skill You Need to Master: Delegating Well”](#), and [“Five Common Delegation Mistakes.”](#)



Discover:

The [Eisenhower Matrix](#) is a helpful tool to help you prioritize and delegate your tasks.



CHALLENGE FOR THIS CHAPTER



Find three small tasks you can delegate this week. Consider tasks that are repetitive, time-consuming, or outside your core strengths. Choose team members who are well-suited for these tasks and communicate your expectations clearly. Set up a simple follow-up system to check in on the progress without micromanaging. After the tasks are completed, reflect on the process. What worked well? What could be improved? Use this insight to refine your delegation approach moving forward.



CHAPTER 6

WHAT EMAIL IS (AND ISN'T) FOR

Yes, we believe this deserves its own chapter!

This book's purpose is to save you time through tips and tricks that you can apply to email and elsewhere. However, it's crucial that part of this journey involves recognizing what email (and indeed, any other platform you may use) is and isn't for. See James' examples of what email is not meant for!



Email is not for urgent communication. Email is asynchronous, meaning there's no guarantee that the recipient will see and respond to your message immediately. For example, I once needed an urgent response from a colleague about an upcoming event. I sent an email, assuming they would see it right away, but they didn't check their inbox until hours later. By that time, we missed the window to make a critical decision. This taught me that for urgent matters, it's better to pick up the phone or send a quick text.

Alternative programs: [Slack](#), [Discord](#), [Zoom](#), text, or a phone call.

Email is not for complex discussions. Email chains breed misunderstandings, and the back-and-forth nature slows down communication. I remember trying to resolve a complicated budget issue through an email chain involving several team members. As more replies came in, the thread grew longer, and it became increasingly difficult to keep track of who said what. Misunderstandings were common, and we wasted a lot of time clarifying points. Eventually, we scheduled a meeting, and in just 30 minutes, we resolved what had taken days to discuss over email. Since then, I've made it a rule to move complex discussions to a meeting or a collaborative document instead of trying to handle them via email.

Alternative programs: [Google Meet](#) or [Zoom](#) for meetings, [Confluence](#) for shared notes.

Email is not for real-time collaboration. When multiple people collaborate on a document, such as a slide deck, using email to coordinate can lead to version control issues and confusion. We once tried to finalize a presentation through email, with each person sending back updated versions. This led to confusion about which was the most current version, and a lot of time was wasted merging changes. I learned that tools like Google Docs or Office 365, which allow real-time collaboration, are much better suited for these tasks.

Alternative programs: [Google Docs](#), [Office 365](#).

Email is not for casual conversation. Email should be reserved for professional communication. Using it more casually leads to important communications being overlooked and cluttered inboxes. In one project, I noticed that casual conversations through email about minor updates cluttered our inboxes and buried important information. This made it harder to find crucial emails when we needed them. We switched to using an instant messaging platform for casual chats, specifically Discord, which kept our email communication clear and focused on what truly mattered.

Alternative programs: Slack, Discord, Zoom.

So what is email for?

Email is for non-urgent communication. If your message doesn't require an immediate response, then email is the right tool.

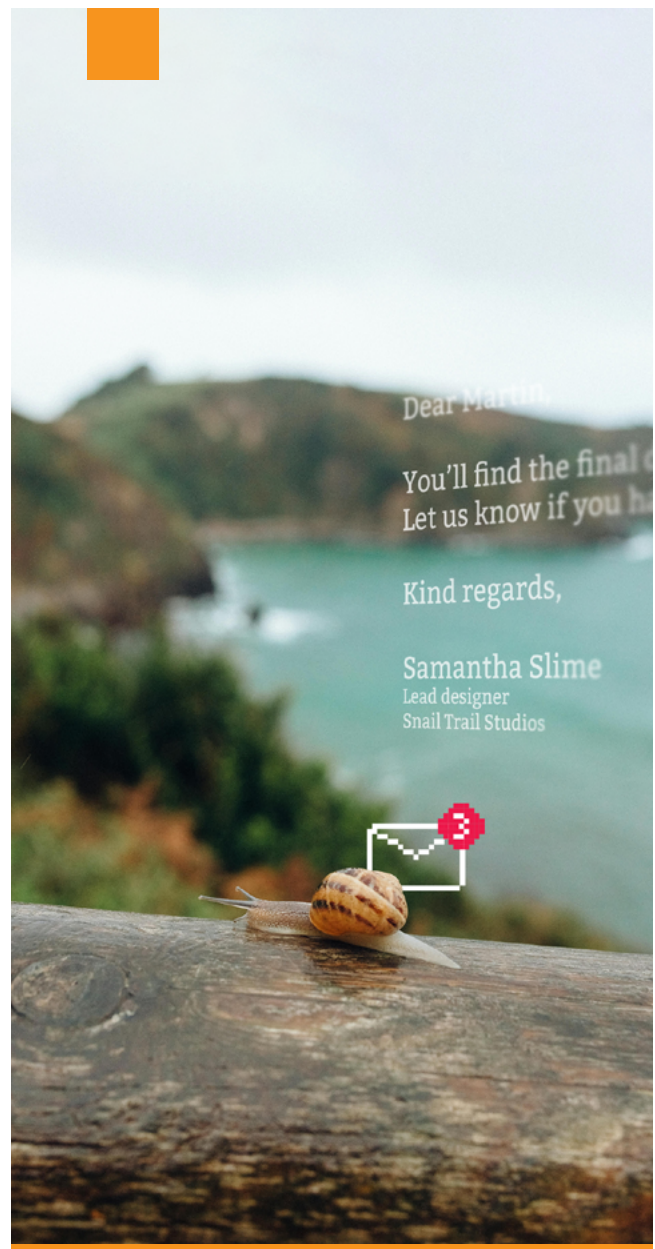
Email is for providing clear and organized communication. Email allows clear communication that can be structured with bullet points, paragraphs and headings to convey information effectively, such as outlining a plan, giving detailed instructions or responding to multiple questions in a single message.

Email is for references or follow ups. After meetings or phone calls, emails can be used to summarize what was discussed and outline follow-up actions.



Subject lines with no more than four words are most likely to get a response.

– [Boomerang App](#)



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THIS CHAPTER



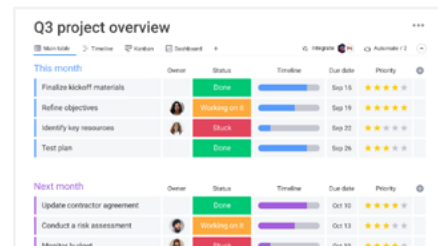
Read:

[“A World Without Email: Reimagining Work in an Age of Communication Overload”](#) by Cal Newport expands on this chapter’s directives on how to redesign workflows that sidestep the pitfalls of email.



Try:

[Asana](#), [Trello](#), [Airtable](#), or [Monday](#) are leading task management tools that allow you step back from using email to coordinate work.



CHALLENGE FOR THIS CHAPTER

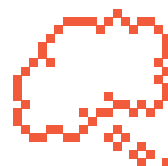


Take a moment to reflect on the tools or mediums you’re currently using outside of email. Are you using them in the most effective way, or could another tool be a better fit?

Here are some examples to consider:

- Using spreadsheets or paper notes for task tracking? Tools like [ClickUp](#), [Todoist](#), or [Notion](#) offer better organization and prioritization for complex projects.
- Relying on instant messaging for discussions? Platforms like [Slack](#) or video calls can ensure clearer communication and real-time alignment.
- Using social media for networking? [LinkedIn](#) is better suited for professional connections than Facebook or Instagram.
- Relying on email for creative feedback? Try [Figma](#) or [Google Docs](#) for real-time collaboration and clearer communication.

These are just a few examples—take a closer look at every aspect of your workflow and ask yourself, is there a better tool, service, or method I could be using to improve this?



FINAL WORDS

Congratulations on making it to the end of this journey! By now, you've learned a range of strategies and tools that can help you optimize your workflow, manage your time more effectively, and ultimately increase your impact in the animal advocacy movement.

Let's take a moment to recap the key takeaways from each chapter:

Adopt a time-saving mindset: Time is your most precious resource. Focus on small, consistent changes to how you manage (and value!) your time to free up hours for what truly matters.

Eliminate distractions and maximize your focus: Distractions can sap your productivity. Reduce physical and digital distractions to create a focus-friendly environment, stay on task, and get more done.

Optimize your workflow: Streamline tools and processes to cut down on wasted time and energy. By optimizing your workflow, you can work smarter, not harder, and accomplish more with less effort.

Automate your repetitive tasks: Automation is your ally in saving time. Filter emails, automate repetitive tasks, and use tools that do the heavy lifting for you to reduce the time spent on routine tasks.

Master the art of delegation: Delegation lets you scale your impact by handing off tasks that don't require your direct involvement. Focus your time on high-value work that only you can do.

The limits of email: Not all communication belongs in your inbox. Choose the right tools to communicate more effectively and reduce clutter, freeing up your time for more important tasks.



LOOKING FORWARD

As you continue your work in animal advocacy, remember that true productivity isn't just about getting more done—it's about making sure you're doing the right things with the time you have.

As you refine your productivity strategies, it's crucial to keep your mental health at the forefront. Putting all of your focus on efficiency won't guarantee you productivity that's sustainable. In fact, it might burn you out instead. But finding a balance that supports both your work and your wellbeing can help ensure you're in it for the long haul. Listen to your body and mind, set boundaries, and don't hesitate to seek support when you need it.

Your impact is vital, but so is your health—because when you take care of yourself, you're better equipped to fight for what matters most.

NEXT STEPS

Now that you've armed yourself with these tools, it's time to put them into action. Choose one area of your workflow to focus on this week. Whether it's setting up automation, decluttering your workspace, or delegating a task, take a step today to start optimizing your work.

And while setting this up might not feel like “real work” and might mean pausing on some emails, it's a **key step toward saving time and energy—both now and in the long run.**

In the next chapter, we've compiled a list of tools and resources that you might find helpful in boosting productivity and simplifying your life. While we're not endorsing each tool, we believe they all have something valuable to offer. **Have fun exploring!**



Want more?

Check out Sofia Balderson's [Productivity Course](#) on Clariteam! As the co-founder of [Hive](#), Sofia brings her expertise to this course, covering three core areas of productivity: prioritization, focus, and action. You'll learn **how to work sustainably** while achieving impactful results that drive your growth. Highly recommended!



RESOURCES

APPS & WEBSITES

- [Arc Browser](#) – A new browser with productivity-focused features like workspaces and sidebar organization to keep you focused and reduce tab overload.
- [Cold Turkey](#) – A desktop app that blocks websites or apps after a certain amount of time per day.
- [Forest](#) – An Android/iOS app that mimics the Pomodoro technique, gamifying your focus by rewarding you with a beautiful virtual forest.
- [Todoist](#) – A well-equipped task management app and one of the most popular productivity apps out there.
- [Habitica](#) – A task management app that doubles as a role-playing game: complete tasks to level up your character!
- [Notion](#) – A popular task management and note-taking app that cuts out the noise and keeps you focused.
- [RescueTime](#) – A time-tracking app that helps you understand and limit where your time goes, with detailed reports and productivity goals.
- [Trello](#) – A visual task management tool with boards and cards, perfect for organizing projects with a team or for personal to-do lists.
- [Focus@Will](#) – A music app designed to help you concentrate by offering different types of music that aid focus.
- [Toggl](#) – A simple yet powerful time-tracking tool that helps you measure productivity and manage your time more effectively across tasks and projects.
- [TickTick](#) – A task manager with Pomodoro, habit tracking, and calendar integration, all in one easy-to-use platform.
- [MindMeister](#) – A mind-mapping tool to organize ideas visually, great for brainstorming and project planning.
- [Brain.fm](#) – A website that provides music scientifically proven to increase focus and support relaxation.
- [Coffitivity](#) – An app similar to Brain.fm but focused on ambient noise—mimics environments such as cafes to help foster creativity and focus.
- [Freedom](#) – A cross-platform app that blocks distracting websites and apps on all your devices.
- [Asana](#) – A project management app that helps teams track work from start to finish, great for both collaboration and individual use.
- [Simple Habit](#) – A meditation and wellness app with short guided sessions to help you manage stress and stay focused.
- [Slack](#) – A communication tool that helps teams collaborate without the distraction of emails; integrates with other productivity apps to keep everything in one place.
- [Otter.ai](#) – A note-taking tool that creates transcripts, automated summaries, action items, from your meetings.



AI FOR EMAIL

- [Superhuman](#) – A high-speed email client with AI-powered features to help you reach Inbox Zero faster, focusing on efficiency and ease of navigation.
- [HEY](#) – Provides a fresh approach to email with AI features that let you organize messages into different sections, helping you control who can reach you and reducing clutter.
- [Spark](#) – Spark’s AI-powered inbox categorizes emails automatically and allows you to prioritize important messages, snooze less urgent ones, and even collaborate on emails with your team.
- [Canary Mail](#) – Focuses on security and productivity with end-to-end encryption and an AI-driven Smart Inbox that helps you prioritize important emails.
- [Clean Email](#) – Uses smart filtering to help you organize and clean up your inbox by categorizing, archiving, and automatically deleting unimportant emails.
- [Boomerang](#) – Known for its “Respondable” feature, which uses AI to analyze your email’s tone, length, and likelihood of getting a response, helping you write more effective messages.
- [Missive](#) – Allows for collaborative email management with team inboxes, while its AI tools help categorize and prioritize emails for better focus.
- [Edison Mail](#) – Known for its AI-powered assistant, which can unsubscribe you from newsletters, track packages, and highlight important emails.
- [Mailbutler](#) – An AI-powered assistant that works with your existing email client, offering tools like follow-up reminders, email tracking, and customizable templates.

AI FOR EVERYTHING

- [NFPs.ai](#) – Provides not-for-profits with direct access to AI knowledge and resources to optimize operations and amplify impact.
- [AI Prompts](#) – Offers a library of AI-generated prompt ideas for animal advocates to inspire creativity and streamline workflows.
- [ChatGPT](#) – A conversational AI tool for brainstorming, writing assistance, and generating code to improve productivity.
- [AI for Animals](#) – Brings leaders together to advance AI innovations that benefit animal welfare and create a better future.
- [Grammarly](#) – Enhances your writing with AI-driven suggestions to ensure clarity, professionalism, and polish.
- [Consensus](#) & [Elicit](#) – Summarizes scientific consensus and answers research questions to help make data-driven decisions.
- [Grantable](#) – Assists with writing clear, compelling grant applications using AI to simplify the process.

PODCASTS

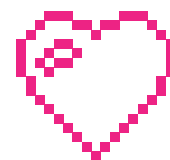
- [Focused](#) – Turns productivity into a passion, with hosts expanding on every facet of life to tune and optimize.
- [Hurry Slowly](#) – Shares productivity tips with an emphasis on maintaining consciousness and creativity.
- [The Tim Ferriss Show](#) – Tim Ferriss interviews top performers across a variety of fields, sharing productivity hacks, routines, and life lessons.
- [Deep Questions with Cal Newport](#) – Cal Newport dives into questions on productivity, deep work, and achieving focus in a noisy world.
- [Beyond the To-Do List](#) – Focuses on actionable productivity tips from people who've successfully managed work-life balance and optimized their workflows.
- [The Productivity Show by Asian Efficiency](#) – Covers productivity techniques, time management, and tips for optimizing workflows.
- [The Mindset Mentor](#) – Aims to help listeners improve productivity by fostering a growth mindset, with advice on discipline, focus, and motivation.
- [The Minimalists Podcast](#) – Although focused on minimalism, the hosts explore ways to simplify life, reduce distractions, and increase productivity.
- [WorkLife with Adam Grant](#) – Hosted by an organizational psychologist, this podcast explores productivity, collaboration, and finding motivation in work.
- [The Daily Stoic](#) – Ryan Holiday offers Stoic-inspired wisdom for focus and productivity, with a focus on resilience and managing distractions.
- [Eat Sleep Work Repeat](#) – Hosted by Bruce Daisley, this podcast covers workplace productivity, work culture, and tips to reduce burnout.

COMMUNITIES

- [r/Productivity](#) – A thriving subreddit community where people share productivity strategies, discussing what works and what doesn't.
- [r/GetDisciplined](#) – Offers useful advice on productivity aids, self-discipline, and motivation strategies.
- [r/GetMotivated](#) – A supportive subreddit focused on motivation. Users share inspiring stories, quotes, and strategies to stay motivated and productive.
- [r/DecidingToBeBetter](#) – This subreddit is all about self-improvement. Members share tips on building good habits, becoming more disciplined, and improving productivity.
- [r/ZenHabits](#) – Inspired by Leo Babauta's Zen Habits blog, this subreddit focuses on simplifying life and cultivating mindfulness, which can greatly aid productivity.
- [r/selfimprovement](#) – A large community focused on improving productivity, building good habits, and reaching personal goals.
- [r/ADHD](#) – A great resource if you're looking for productivity hacks specifically for people with ADHD, offering advice on managing focus, tasks, and organization.
- [r/StopGaming](#) – Focused on reducing or quitting gaming, this subreddit often discusses productivity tips to help people regain time and focus.
- [r/NonZeroDay](#) – Based on the idea of always doing at least something each day toward your goals. Members share small wins, productivity tips, and encouragement.
- [r/ProductivityApps](#) – Dedicated to finding and discussing the best apps and tools to stay productive, often reviewing new releases and sharing insights on app usage.

BOOKS

- [“Digital Minimalism: Choosing a Focused Life in a Noisy World” by Cal Newport](#) – Explores how reducing digital clutter can lead to greater focus, productivity, and satisfaction.
- [“Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break Bad Ones” by James Clear](#) – A practical guide to building habits that support productivity, automation, and self-improvement.
- [“Let It Go!: How to \(Finally\) Master Delegation & Scale Freedom Across Your Organization” by Emily Morgan](#) – Focuses on mastering delegation and building systems for scaling productivity and efficiency.
- [“Essentialism: The Disciplined Pursuit of Less” by Greg McKeown](#) – Focuses on doing less but better, helping you identify what’s essential and let go of what isn’t.
- [“Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity” by David Allen](#) – A classic in productivity, offering a system for managing tasks and organizing work.
- [“The 4-Hour Workweek: Escape 9-5, Live Anywhere, and Join the New Rich” by Tim Ferriss](#) – Covers automation and outsourcing to help maximize efficiency and free up time.
- [“Deep Work: Rules for Focused Success in a Distracted World” by Cal Newport](#) – Emphasizes the importance of focused work and eliminating distractions to boost productivity.
- [“Make Time: How to Focus on What Matters Every Day” by Jake Knapp and John Zeratsky](#) – Offers strategies for prioritizing important tasks and making time for what truly matters.
- [“Measure What Matters: OKRs: The Simple Idea that Drives 10x Growth” by John Doerr](#) – A guide to setting and tracking objectives and key results to optimize focus and productivity.
- [“Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the Work in Half the Time” by Jeff Sutherland](#) – Introduces the Scrum framework for managing projects efficiently, often used in teamwork but adaptable to personal productivity.
- [“The One Thing: The Surprisingly Simple Truth Behind Extraordinary Results” by Gary Keller and Jay Papasan](#) – Focuses on finding and prioritizing the single most important task for big results.
- [“Work Clean: The Life-Changing Power of Mise-en-Place to Organize Your Life, Work, and Mind” by Dan Charnas](#) – Adapts the chef’s technique of mise-en-place for organizing work and life to boost productivity.
- [“The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business” by Charles Duhigg](#) – Explains the science of habits and how to build productive routines, crucial for delegation and automation.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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THANK YOU!



“ I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who helped bring this ebook to life. From shaping the content to perfecting the design, this project was a team effort, and I couldn’t have done it without James, our Executive Director; Gabrielè, our Communications Director; and Kate, Thomas, and Leanne from Violet Studios, whose incredible design work and flexibility made this project shine.

This ebook was inspired by the many conversations I’ve had with inspiring advocates managing multiple roles, projects, and tasks. My hope is that this guide gives you practical tools to optimize, delegate, and automate your workflows, not only saving time but bringing a sense of ease and clarity to your day-to-day life.

It means the world to know that you’ve taken the time to read this. If even a handful of readers find themselves reclaiming a few extra hours or enjoying greater efficiency because of these ideas, then it will all have been worth it. Thank you for letting this guide be a small part of your journey!”

- DAVID

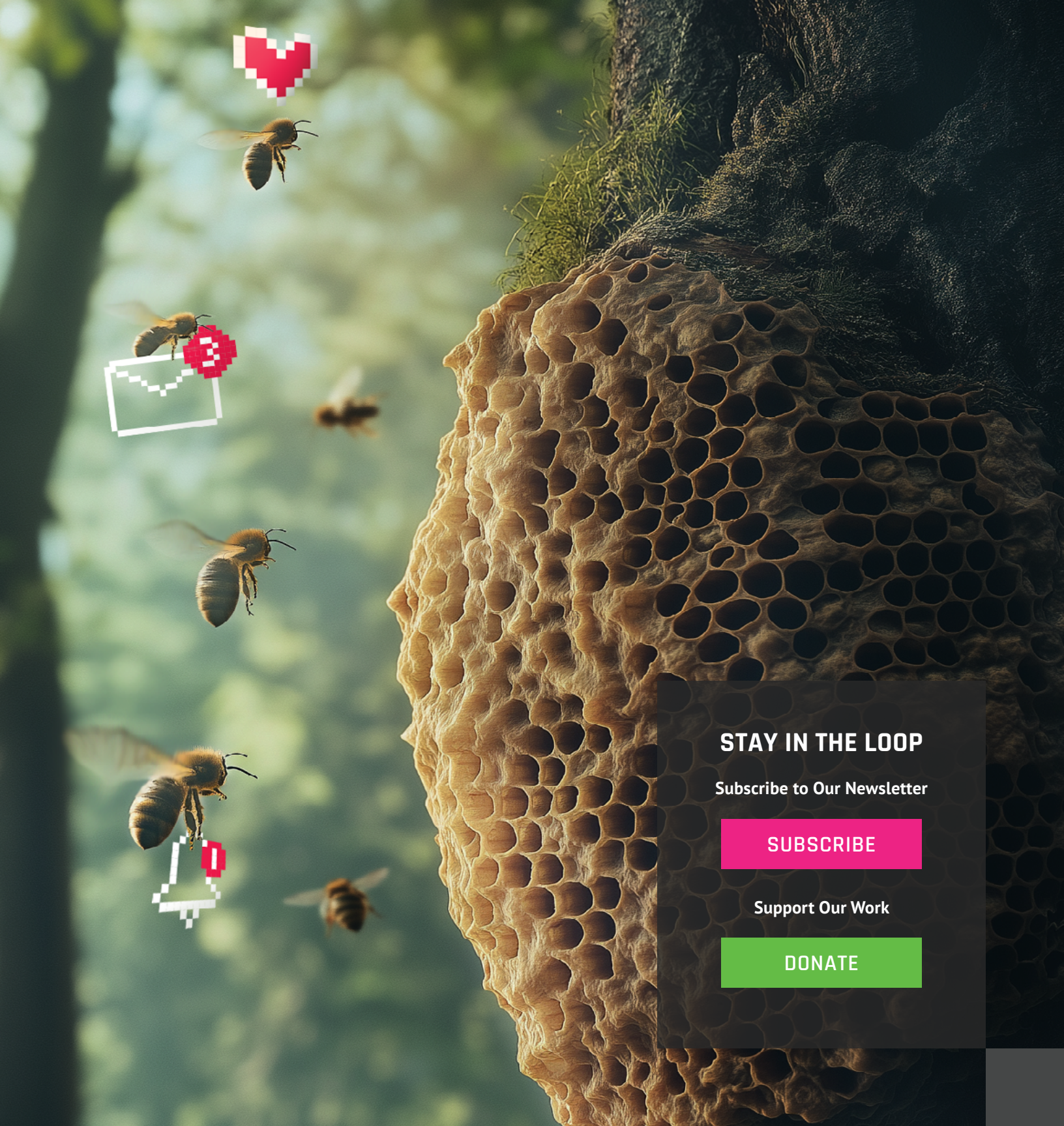
“ I would like to thank the entire Vegan Hacktivists team for introducing to me the tools, apps, books and concepts that have transformed how I work today. Nowhere else in my professional life have I encountered such a dedicated group of individuals focused on maximizing output through the power of prioritization, deep focus on what truly matters, and eliminating both physical and digital clutter to perform at our best.

I would also like to thank my mother, who ingrained in me a strong work ethic and encouraged experimentation with different approaches—always with a focus on the “Just Do It” mentality, which has been a guiding force in my productivity journey.

Lastly, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my wife, Abi. Her approach to productivity is different from mine, stemming from entirely different roles and organizational cultures, and whilst she harnesses methods and traits that contrast with my own, her efficiency and effectiveness never cease to amaze me. She achieves remarkable results with a fluidity and adaptability that I deeply admire. She has shown me that productivity isn’t one-size-fits-all, and that there’s much to be learned from embracing our individual strengths. Abi, thank you for teaching me that there are many paths to success and for continually inspiring me to grow.”

- JAMES





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