Inbox Zero: Roadmap To A Calmer Mind

Luigi Benetton
Technology and Business Writer
www.LuigiBenetton.com

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Next steps

- Write the following:
  - A project you're working on
  - The next step you need to take to advance that project

- Anybody feel calmer?

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Current inbox status

- How many emails are in your inbox right now?
  - Zero
  - 1-10
  - 10-50
  - 50-100
  - Dating from the Paleolithic era

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Current inbox status

- How many people have empty email inboxes?
  - Why?
  - Where is all the information from those messages?

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Current inbox status

- Your inbox contains
  - a jumble of next steps
  - mixed with things that look like next steps but aren't

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Current inbox status

- Other "inboxes" containing things to deal with
  - phone messages
  - texts
  - social media messages
  - Notebook
    - Notes
    - temporary filing
  - Snail mail

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Snail mail

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Inbox Zero

* There are no emails in your inbox at the end of your workday
  * same with other inboxes that contain next steps

* Minimize
  * physical clutter
  * psychological turbulence

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Inbox Zero is…

* … a process driven by habits
* … NOT a specific technology
* … often a lengthy process the first time you do it
* … easier to tackle if you have a game plan

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Your presentation notes

* During this presentation, please record:
  * next steps
  * questions
  * ideas
  * further research

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Setting expectations

* The more emails you have in your inbox right now, the more time you'll need to spend to get to Inbox Zero

* Silver lining:
  * The work you do up front can become good habits

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Email newsletters (and spam)

* Unsubscribe from newsletters you don't:
  * read
  * value
* No unsubscribe? Mark as spam

* Put the rest somewhere beside your inbox

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Email newsletters (and spam)

* Write the name of one newsletter that you don't want to receive anymore
* Set intention to:
  * unsubscribe
  * delete all copies in your inbox

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Getting email out of the inbox

* Two choices
  * Delete it (self-explanatory)
  * File it

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Filing email

* Use folders in email software
  * utility bills
  * client correspondence
  * tax information

* Separate business from personal
  * subfolders

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Filing email

* Write name of one client
* Write name of one or more projects for that client
* Set intention to create folder and subfolder(s) in your email software

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Email rules

* Automate actions you want done on emails
  * excellent for filing

* Examples
  * newsletters
  * project correspondence

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Email rules

* My favorite rule
  * Write topic in subject line of email (e.g. update on "Project X")
  * Create rule to file emails having topic words ("Project X") in subject line in proper folder

* Why it works reliably?
  * Few people change subject lines in emails

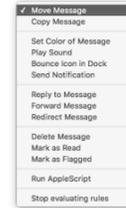**Luigi Benetton Communications**
clarity out of complexity

Email rules

▓Pick a criterion
  ▓sender (e.g. client name, or domain
   "@companyname.com" without person's name)
  ▓subject (e.g. project name)

▓Choose an action
  ▓file email in folder

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Email rules

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Email rules

▓Inbox and Sent Items folder
  ▓Select all
  ▓Right-click in the sent items list and click "Apply Rules"
   (or the equivalent)

▓Results
  ▓Correspondence moves to right folders
  ▓Leftover messages – delete or file

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

"Two-minute tasks"

▓Is it faster to do than to plan for?
  ▓Just do it
  ▓Delete or file the email

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

"Two-minute tasks"

▓Write a two-minute task waiting for you in your
 inbox

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Appointments

▓Calendar, not inbox
  ▓save the text of the email in the Notes field - all the
   information available in one place
  ▓invite other meeting attendees to the appointment

▓Next steps?
  ▓file it
  ▓delete it

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Appointments

- Write one appointment from your inbox that you need to put in your calendar
  - work or non-work

Contact information

- Contact list, not inbox
  - Save text of email in the Notes field - all the information available in one place

- LinkedIn connection?
- Next steps?
  - file it
  - delete it

Contact information

- Write the name of one person whose contact information you get from an email signature
- Set the intention to add him/her to your contact list

Tasks

- Task list, not inbox
  - Save text of email in the Notes field - all the information available in one place

- Tasks aren't calendar appointments
  - to be done by a given time, but not at a given time or date
  - discuss article outline with client on phone
    - calendar appointment
  - write article outline
    - task

Tasks

- Write a task sitting in your inbox to be done by a certain date

Reading list

- Specialized lists (maybe it's just me)

- Recommended reading task list, not inbox
  - tag such tasks as "Recommended reading"
  - makes them easier to find

Reading list

* Write name of one book somebody recommended to you via email

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Other email tips - alerts

* Turn off email alerts
  * check email 2-3 times per day

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Other email tips - threads

* Turn on threads/conversations
  * keeps emails on a specific topic grouped together
  * easier to glean meaning of conversations

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Other email tips – spam "false positives"

* Messages that aren't spam can get caught by spam filters
  * emails from friends
  * notices about events you care about
  * inquiries about new business
* Check your spam filters every day
  * easier to catch false positives if spam doesn't pile up

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Other email tips – one system to rule them all

* One email system can handle multiple email addresses
  * saves time
  * helps ensure you see all important messages

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Inbox Zero objective

* Transfer information from your inbox to where it belongs
  * Calendar
  * Contacts
  * Task list
  * Folders (rules)
  * Trash/Spam
  * Other?

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

My favorite productivity book

✲Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity
  ✲David Allen
  ✲"clearing the runway"
  ✲source of many ideas in this presentation

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Productivity blogging

✲Search www.LuigiBenetton.com for following titles:
  ✲Effectively filtering junk mail
  ✲One rule to rule them all
  ✲Clearing the sent items email folder
  ✲Email and healthy skepticism

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Practice healthy skepticism

✲Try a productivity habit for a week
  ✲As long as it takes to get past initial discomfort
✲If it doesn't work, move on

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity

Thanks for listening!

✲Luigi Benetton
  ✲www.LuigiBenetton.com
  ✲http://www.linkedin.com/in/luigibenetton

✲Questions?

Luigi Benetton Communications
clarity out of complexity