

## TAMING THE SAVAGE E-MAIL BEAST

If making e-mail work for you instead of against you is a goal of yours, you won't want to miss Stever Robbins' article, "Tips for Mastering E-mail Overload," in a recent issue of Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge e-zine.

Robbins, a leadership consultant and author of "It Takes a Lot More than Attitude to Lead a Stellar Organization," says that "taming e-mail means training the senders to put the burden of quality back on themselves." He recommends a two-pronged approach:

- lead by example by sending better e-mail yourself (by making your e-mails one page or less, editing forwarded messages, making action requests clear, providing full context at the beginning of each message, etc.),
- explicitly training others to make their online communications more productive.

When it comes to teaching others, Robbins offers the following suggestions:

- Only check your e-mail at certain times each day. Let your people know that if they need to reach you immediately, "e-mail isn't the way," he writes.
- "Charge people for sending you messages." One CEO Robbins has worked with charges employees five dollars from their budget for each e-mail she gets. "Amazingly, her overload has gone way down, the relevance of e-mails has gone up, and the senders are happy, too, because the added thought often results in them solving more problems on their own," he writes.
- Keep your responses short. Responding to three-page e-mails with three-word answers lets people know not to expect long responses from you, "and then you can proceed to answer at your leisure in whatever format works best for you," Robbins says.

For other e-mail taming tips, see:

[http://hbswk.hbs.edu/tools/print\\_item.jhtml?id=4438&t=leadership](http://hbswk.hbs.edu/tools/print_item.jhtml?id=4438&t=leadership)

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