

# Inbox Zero

Handling email more efficiently

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## Overview

Email today

Inbox Zero - what it is

Requirements, Workflow and my Inbox

Routines

Email - my best practices

# My problems with email as Postdoc

- permanent distraction: inbox counter
- full inbox: read emails again and again and find out that they are not yet done ⇒ a lot of read emails in inbox
- forgot to answer long-term emails
  - typical with long due dates with long tasks
  - "please sign copyright agreement and send it to ..."

# as Scrummaster

- permanent distraction: inbox counter
- lots of mails where it is unclear why/what/who/how to act
- continuous distraction for the team
  - lost important alert emails
  - conversations get out of hand

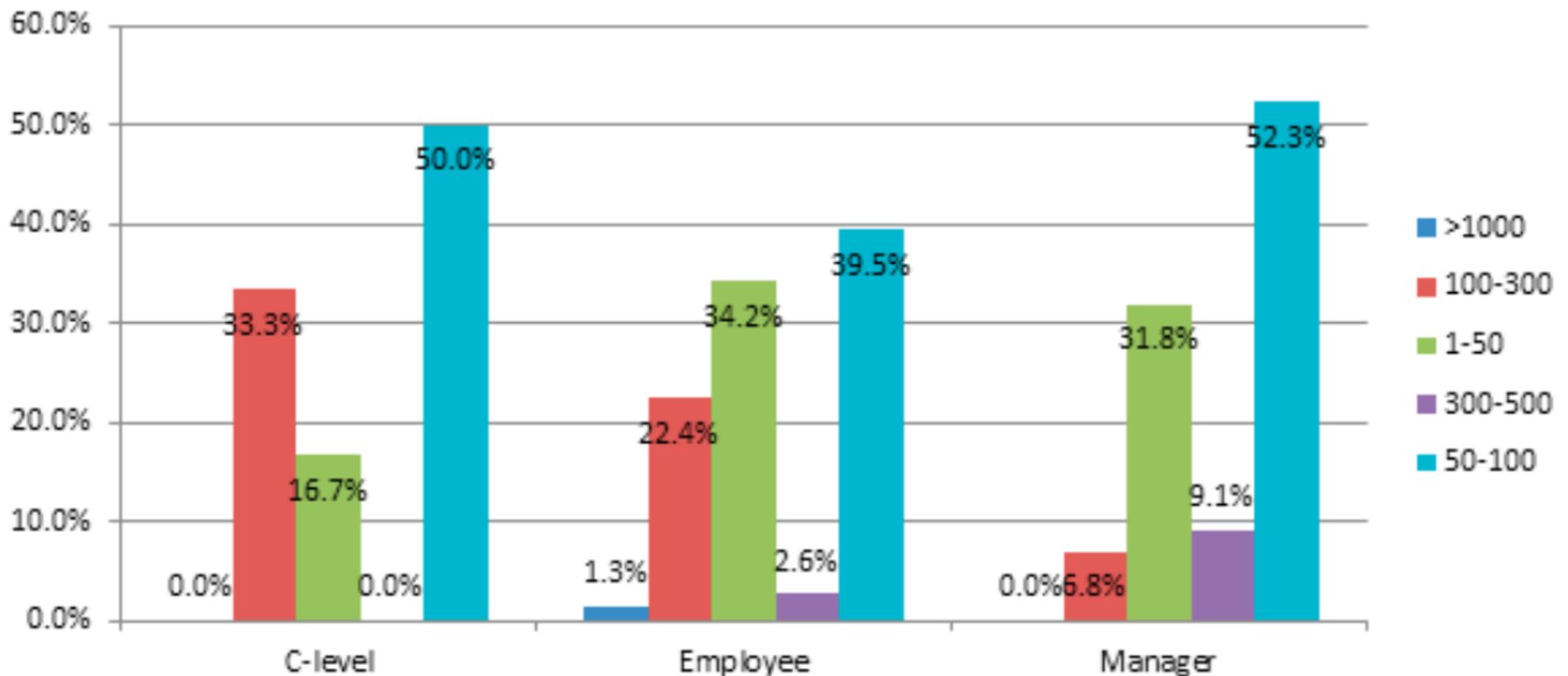
# as Product owner

- permanent distraction: inbox counter
- lots of mails where it is unclear why/what/who/how to act
- continuous distraction
  - sunken emails with low importance
  - long reply times
  - cleanups necessary

# I am not alone...(i)

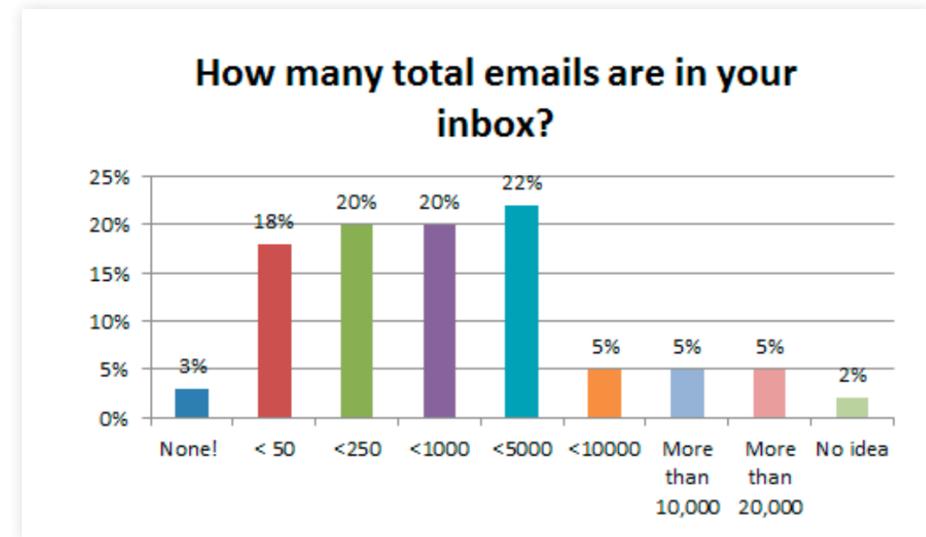
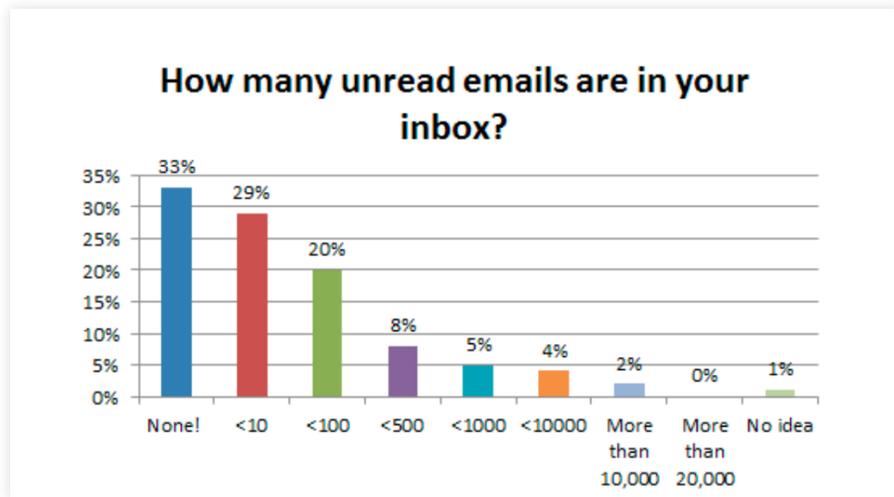
More than 2/3 of "thought workers" get more than 50 emails per working day!

## Email Daily Volumes by Job



# I am not alone... (ii)

People use the Inbox as their task list



Varonis.com (2012): Digital Work Habits: Research Report.  
URL: <http://hub.varonis.com/digital-work-habits-report>

# Your Inbox is a bad task list!

- no status information (to do, in progress, waiting)
- no priority
- no due dates
- no context
  - notes or comments
  - location

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Email today

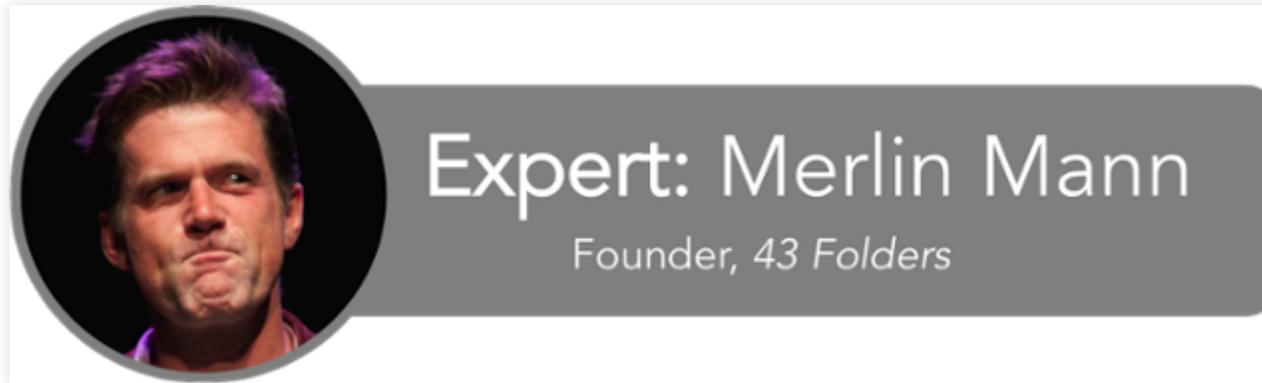
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# What it is



- way to manage large amount of emails by a predefined process by processing your Inbox completely, every time you open it
- a framework which can be adapted to your needs
- incorporates into Getting Things Done (GTD) by David Allen
- *Wiki: Inbox Zero is a rigorous approach to email management aimed at keeping the inbox empty -- or almost empty -- at all times.*
- my opinion: definition is too narrow and wrong



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# The 4Ds (plus 1R)

- Immediately
  - Delete
  - Do
- Later
  - Delegate
  - Defer
  - Respond

# Requirements (i)

- Simple ToDo List

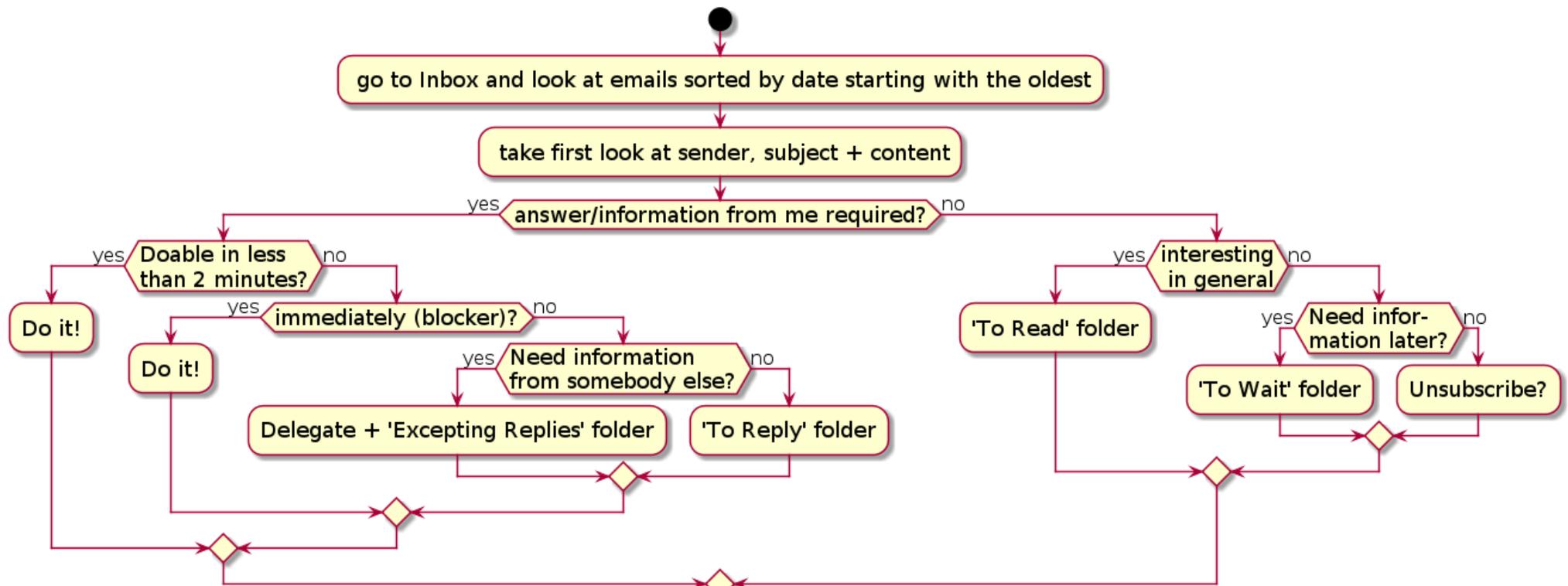
- Zimbra, Wunderlist, Todoist, GTD Tools, Outlook, Google Tasks, Lightning
- todo.txt (taskwarrior) - .txt file
- Notebook (physical)



# Requirements (ii)

- Calendar
  - Google Calendar
  - Lightning
  - Zimbra, Outlook
  - Physical
- Note Storage
  - Evernote
  - Physical
  - Zim
  - Folders and .txt files
- Email with search and filter capability
  - Thunderbird
  - Outlook, Gmail
- patience and will - to get used to Inbox Zero

# Workflow through my Inbox



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# Routine - Clean Inbox

- how often: depends on your emails and position...
- how long can the most important email wait? (for me, usually: 1h)
- filter/alert only for VIP?
- close email client!!!!
- don't use a smartwatch or sound notifications on your smartphone (turn around)

# Routine - Clean Folders

- "To Reply" folder
  - for me: every 12h
  - Tim Ferriss: once a month (author of "The 4-Hour Workweek")
- "Expecting Replies" (for me: every day)
- "To Read" (for me: every week)
- "Defer" (for me: every week)
- "Tng@all" (for me: 3x a week)

# Email client (Thunderbird) Hacks

- Group by topic
- Show sender and recipient
- Highlight emails to you (only)/from you
- Show numbers of emails by folder
- Use clever filters
- Order folders by relevance/frequency

# Archiving and Searching

- Archive them all! (automatically)
- Find by searching
- Hint: global search for trash in thunderbird has to be activated
- Searching by text > Searching by hand (date, sender) > folder

# Some nice tools

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Alternative/Remark</b>	<b>Description</b>
Pocket	Instapaper, Readability	Save articles to read for later/offline
Nostalgia, FiltaQuilla, ThreadVis, Duplicates	Addons for Thunderbird	Demo
Smartwatch(?)	Pebble	Have a short look at email
Zapier mail parser	Zapier, IFTTT	Process similar emails automatically

11/11/2015 10:00:00 AM

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# How people read (i)



<http://www.practicallyefficient.com/2010/10/27/evolving-email-the-war-on-email-obesity.html>

# How people read (ii)

- Headers
- Images
- First words of paragraph
- Nielsen:
  - Writing: 600 words ~ 30 minutes
  - Reading: 100 words ~ 4.4 seconds
  - write less than 111 words if you want at least half of your words read

<https://www.nngroup.com/articles/e-mail-newsletters-usability/>

# Rules

- one topic per email
- subject reflects that topic
- use headlines to give structure
- first write an outline (sometimes enough)
- make clear who needs to act
  - Act: To + "@"... + "?"
  - CC = FYI or escalation
  - BCC: don't
- important: Review
- conflict: talk or telephone?

# Less time for emails

- establish reply times (phone, SMS, email, ...)
- use low energy hours for email
- define focus time
- bundle similar tasks/replies/...
- Newsletter to RSS/Pocket/Blogs/Posterous
- replace Facebook by google alert/nuzzel once a day
- list and track your inboxes
- forward all new messages to a list on a Trello board labeled "Email Triage."

<http://blog.trello.com/why-context-switching-ruins-productivity/>

# Vielen Dank!

## Fragen?



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