

# LOST IN COMMUNICATION?

Let's take back control of knowledge work  
and start having real conversations

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**Billions of emails get tossed around between knowledge workers each week. Email is the dominant way of operating when communicating and collaborating with colleagues – but it’s the wrong way of working, if you want to speed up and improve the daily workflow.**

In a survey done by Atos Consulting in 2011, a quarter of the knowledge workers in their company said they used 25% of their time answering internal emails with no value to the organization. A McKinsey report from 2012 states that the amount of time we use on internal emails is 28%, and fruitless information search is 19%. In short, we are stuck in emails that absorb time we could use differently and better.

#### **Emails kill concentration**

The steady stream of emails is killing concentration. The ‘boing’ and ‘blink’ indicators from our inboxes are constantly drawing our attention away from the knowledge work we’re in the middle of doing. The consequence of losing full concentration is affecting the quality of problem solving and decision-making:

“In a knowledge based economy, we propose that a knowledge worker’s primary deliverable is a good decision. In addition, more and more people are being tasked with making decisions that are likely to be biased – because of the presence of too much information, time pressure, simultaneous choice, or some other constraints” (Milkman, 2008).

#### **Who answers 300 emails a day?**

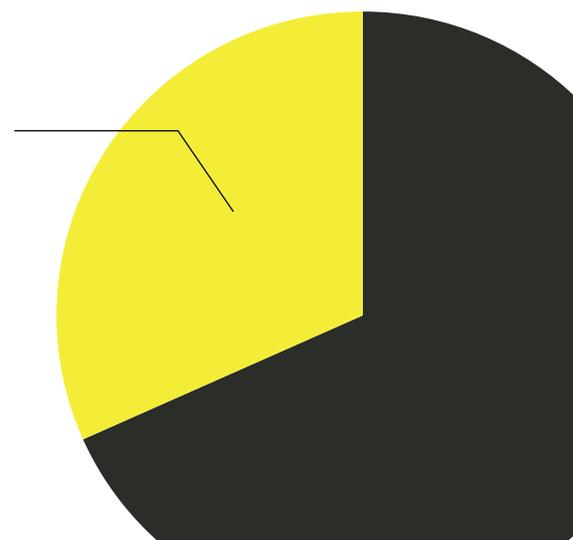
We spend 28% of our workday on internal emails of no value

If you receive more than 300 emails a day, you are faced with the challenge of concentrating on good and sound problem solving and decision-making. Add to this that email has turned communication and collaboration into “a disjointed, inefficient volley of keyboard strokes” causing misunderstandings, chaos and frustrations in many teams and organizations (Rodriguez, 2014).

We are somehow lost in communication.

“Working on a global team means that when I have finally emptied my in-box at night, I wake up to 300 new emails.”

– New Ways of Working Research Respondent



“The same email from the CEO sent out individually to members of the same management team just created a chaos of intertwined replies, forwards, CC’s, BCC’s, you name it. I lost track of the discussion – I have had enough.”

– New Ways of Working Research Respondent

**Let's find a new way of working**

We propose a new way of working. Let's take back control of knowledge work by cutting down on email communication, and replace some of the emails with conversations and open collaboration platforms. It will free up time for better concentration, ultimately resulting in improved productivity, problem solving and decision-making.

**Why does more conversation matter?**

We all misunderstand emails – either because we don't take the time to read them, because we are doing something else, or the sender uses inaccurate phrasing. In emails we often miss the

critical state of communication signals that we easily recognize in voice, mimic and gestures. So, if you want to make things happen, avoid using emails.

The business value is clear. If you adopt a conversation culture around problem solving and decision-making, it will reduce misunderstandings and tension. It will also reduce the amount of incoming emails, and free up time for collaborating and concentrating.



**THE RULES ARE**

- » Never email when you can call
- » Never call when you can video chat
- » Never video chat when you can talk face-to-face

**Why does more collaboration matter?**

Email is too often used for discussions. But email is a closed communication channel, best used for individual private messages, documentation and simple 'yes' and 'no' answers. Opening the discussion up for wider involvement of co-workers on an Enterprise Collaboration Platform will help bring more relevant knowledge workers to the discussion-table, and improve the grounds on which the problem-solving and decision-making are done. An open collaboration platform will also decrease the information search time, since a simple "can someone help me find this and that?" is likely to be answered by those with a fast, correct and precise answer – and a link to the solution. An open collaboration culture will speed up and improve knowledge creation.

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**Why does more concentration matter?**

In a recent survey conducted in a global engineering company, 58% of respondents agreed that "too often we miss getting into the essence of the problem we're trying to solve". And 54% felt that "too often we set aside too little time to prepare properly for problem solving and decision-making".

Concentration and individual time to focus are essential needs, and a concentration culture will surely increase productivity.

**Take part in the evolution**

New Ways of Working is about changing culture and behavior to support more productive knowledge creation, better problem solving and an increased rate of innovation. Follow our blog. We are giving advice on how you can start the movement in your organization by making your own individual choices.

[blog.jabra.com](http://blog.jabra.com)

## References

<sup>1</sup> Whitepaper: Atos Consulting, 2011 "Doing More with Less: the New Productivity Paradigm". <http://uk.atosconsulting.com/content/dam/uk-atosconsulting/documents/We%20Are/atos-consulting-positioning-paper-doing-more-with-less-the-new-productivity-paradigm.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> McKinsey Global Institute "The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies", July 2012 | by Michael Chui, James Manyika, Jacques Bughin, Richard Dobbs, Charles Roxburgh, Hugo Sarrazin, Geoffrey Sands and Magdalena Westergren. [http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/high\\_tech\\_telecoms\\_internet/the\\_social\\_economy](http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/high_tech_telecoms_internet/the_social_economy)

<sup>3</sup> How Can Decision Making Be Improved? (2008) By Katherine L. Milkman, Harvard University, Dolly Chugh, New York University and Max H. Bazerman, Harvard University.

<sup>4</sup> Rodriguez, Diego, Partner at IDEA at LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/today/post/article/20140121112531-5935179-productivity-hacks-more-talk-less-type>

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