

Endless in-box can hurt performance

By ARATI BECHTEL, Correspondent

Q. I keep all of my e-mail in my in-box, deleting only junk mail. I have more than 1,000 e-mail messages stacked up in my in-box. My co-worker tells me this could eventually cause problems for my e-mail use. Is this true?

A. For reasons of technology and efficiency, continuing to build a massive stack of e-mail in your in-box is inadvisable. You're pushing the envelope on your in-box, and you're probably spending too much time wading through e-mail, says Clay Harris, vice president of WorkSmart, an information technology support and consulting company working with businesses in North Carolina.

At some point, the increasing amount of e-mail in your in-box will probably affect the performance of your e-mail program, he says.

"Because your in-box is used constantly, it's most likely that problems will occur with the in-box. If the in-box gets corrupted, you could lose all of your messages," Harris explains.

Managing your current e-mail can be unwieldy with more than 1,000 messages in your in-box.

Harris has a few suggestions. First, you could consider archiving your old e-mail. You could safely tuck away messages from, say, more than six months ago. Many e-mail programs have built-in archiving features.

Another in-box-reduction technique is to use rules and folders to organize the messages in your in-box. For example, a rule could take messages from a particular sender, or messages with attachments, out of the in-box and place them in a specific folder.

Of course, you can also manually sort messages. Harris manually moves his messages out of his in-box into about 200 different folders. Sorting features in e-mail programs can help you organize e-mail by many characteristics, including size, subject and recipient.

A final tip is to export or back up your e-mail at least once a week.

Q. I would like to know how to delete the addresses of sites that I have visited and no longer need on Google and Internet Explorer.

A. You can clear out your History on Internet Explorer by clicking on Tools, then Internet Options and then the button labeled "Clear History." That will get rid of the list of pages you've recently visited.

If you are using the Google tool bar, a downloadable feature that essentially attaches the Google search box to your browser, you can delete your search history there, too. The Google tool bar remembers the search terms you've entered in a drop-down list. You can clear that list by clicking on the Google logo on the tool bar and selecting "Clear Search History." If you choose "Options" after clicking on the Google logo, you can select "More" and then uncheck the option to "Save the search history across browser sessions."

You may also want to check the AutoComplete feature of Internet Explorer, which can remember information about your Web travels. If enabled, this feature displays a drop-down list of similar addresses you've visited when you start to type in a Web page address.

This feature can also store words and phrases you have previously entered in boxes and forms at Web sites, such as search terms, names and passwords.

Here's how you can delete selected items from this list: To display the list of items you have previously typed in a box or form, double-click your mouse in the empty box. Move your mouse cursor over the word you want to delete, but don't click on it; just highlight it. Hit the delete key on your keyboard to remove the item from the list.

You may choose to simply turn off the AutoComplete feature in Internet Explorer. Go to the Tools menu and choose "Internet Options." Click "Content" and then the AutoComplete button. Here, you can uncheck any of the following: "Web addresses," "Forms" and "User names and passwords on forms."

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