



# What does a toxic email culture look like?

**Every organisation has a set of processes and behaviours that people have adopted as the way they “do” email.**

Email volume is on the rise. You can expect to receive at least 20% more email next year than you do now. As we struggle to deal with this ever increasing volume of email, inefficient practices start to develop and organisational productivity declines. The end result can be a toxic email culture.

How do you know if the email culture in your organisation is toxic?

There are 7 tell-tale signs:

**1. As you walk around the office you can hear the “beep” of emails being delivered.**

Every email “beep” causes a break in concentration which results in 64 seconds of lost time. This doesn’t take into account the time lost checking the newly delivered email and switching from one task (the current task) to another (checking email).

**2. You get emails requesting an immediate response.**

Using email when an urgent response is required doesn’t make sense. It assumes that you are sitting at your desk just waiting to respond to emails. It encourages people to live in their Inbox and when we do this, we become interrupt-driven rather than plan-driven.

**3. You receive a high volume of Cc’d email.**

Overuse of Cc’ing and Reply to All is one of the main contributors to excessive email volume in organisations. Excessive volume costs time and money and is a big contributor to the “hidden” costs of email.

**4. You find yourself frequently involved in a case of email ping-pong.**

Once a conversation goes back and forth three times without resolution, it’s time to talk. Email is not going to get the job done efficiently (if at all).

**5. You receive emails with vague subject lines and required action not clearly stated; if at all.**

A poorly constructed email takes on average 10 seconds longer to read. Vague subject lines make an email difficult to manage and when any required action is not stated clearly, deadlines can be missed and more emails are generated to clarify requirements.

**6. You have an accumulation of emails in your Inbox. (Doesn’t everyone?)**

An overloaded Inbox is a sign that email management processes are not working well. Accumulated emails become a distraction and worse, a source of stress.

**7. Online silence is frequently the response to your emails.**

No response. You send an email and that’s what you get, or if you eventually get a response, it’s not in a timely manner. Online silence results when people are struggling to manage the volume of email they receive. Their Inbox management processes are failing them.

The cost to the organisation of a toxic email culture is huge. It can be in the vicinity of 20 days per person per year.



### **So how can you change a toxic email culture?**

The first step is to establish a set of detailed guidelines that set the standard for email behaviour in your organisation and then educate, educate, educate.

Show people the benefits that can be obtained from putting into place best practice processes for using what is now our primary business communication tool – email.



*If you would like to find out how I have helped other organisations reduce the hidden costs of email, please call me on 0438 699 153; email me at [jani@emailsmart.com.au](mailto:jani@emailsmart.com.au) or visit [www.emailsmart.com.au](http://www.emailsmart.com.au).*