

# AVOID EMAIL MELTDOWN

Seven of the UK's most productive women reveal how they manage their inboxes

WORDS: JO USMAR



**NANA WEREKO-BROBBY**  
Director and founder of dating club **Social Concierge**

"I check my work email more than 20 times a day and prioritise clients I need to respond to quickly by moving them to another platform, such as WhatsApp or Telegram [an instant messaging app]. It's quicker, easier and often clients don't want messages about their love-life in their work email. I'll let other emails sit for two to three days so people don't assume it's an instant messenger tool. One-to-two times a week, I set up an out-of-office saying, 'I'm experiencing a high volume of emails at the moment. It may take up to 36 hours to respond.'"



**KALI POTISZIL**  
Specialist in oncoplastic breast surgery

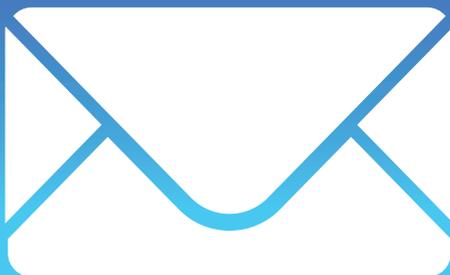
"I'm usually in surgery or seeing patients face-to-face, so I have to be uncompromising in what emails I do or don't answer when I am actually at a computer. I prioritise messages regarding patient care and others simply have to wait. As a general rule, I won't answer any that I know I can resolve in person within the next 24 hours. Accepting that I don't have the time to answer every message fully and moving on with my day is essential in being efficient and making the bigger picture work. This is no different for any busy job. Accept you can't do everything from the outset, prioritise and move on."



**ALICE SANTANA**  
Advertising production consultant to global commercial brands

"I try to keep to 50 or fewer messages in my inbox so I implement a 'do it, delete it, delegate it or flag it for later' system. With clients I usually reply straight away, acknowledging receipt with a clear timeframe of when I'll be able to respond with answers or feedback. I shut down my personal account during the day and my work one during the evenings, and I try not to send any emails over the weekend or in the evening.

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Otherwise you indicate that you are permanently available. Prepare emails by all means, but save them to drafts and send the next morning during office hours. It's also kinder to the poor person receiving your 'ping' at 10pm."



**GABRIELLE LOTT**  
PR and marketing consultant for digital transformation consultancy **Made By Many**

"I have three email addresses – two business, one personal – which all run on Gmail, so sharing calendars and documents is simple. I am a prolific filer. My emails are sorted into folders by year, month and then project. Once a week, I have an email 'sort out', when I go through each one, make notes on key points in a notebook and then file it away. Any emails left in my inbox on Monday are those I have to reply to first thing. Ultimately though, I work in advertising, I'm not a heart surgeon. No one is going to die because I didn't answer an email that was sent out of working hours."



**KATE DUNN**  
Creative director of **MTV UK and Ireland**

"I hate having unread emails. I delete anything I don't need, plus any responses that just say 'yes', 'thanks' or 'sounds great' and spend 15 minutes each day filing everything into sub-folders. I also set 'rules' for certain people so their emails go straight into designated folders – an important client's message will go into my 'Must Do Today' folder while an email from HR will go into 'Office Info'. It keeps my inbox tidy and saves me siphoning them off myself."



**KAREN HODKINSON**  
Global client partner (fashion and luxury) at production company **Stink**

"I work at a global business, so emails come in day and night from Shanghai to São Paulo. I could always be 'on' but I try to only check my inbox at specific times of day. I also try to relieve pressure on my emails by using Instagram DM, LinkedIn Messenger and Facebook. I think we've come to misuse emails, with some seeing the amount they have in their inbox as a badge of honour. But it's super-important that we communicate verbally, too."



**FRAN GRIFFIN**  
Client director, **Mash PR**

"For me, a tidy inbox means a tidy mind. I'm always checking emails between meetings and I find the Microsoft Outlook app is best for on-the-go. It has a focused filter option that separates marketing-related emails or those I have been copied into, from direct emails I've received, all under different tabs. It saves so much time. I have email rules on my Macbook too – from automatic foldering to prioritising emails from certain clients, so they automatically jump to the top. I also use different notification sounds, so I know when an email comes through from an important client."