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TECH PIECES

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In this issue…

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Email Therapy: 4 tips to increase productivity inside your inbox

At first, email is a wonderful thing; everything is so well organized, it's absurdly simple to keep in touch with people, and everything seems to naturally fall into place. But then… something happens and suddenly, it's not so wonderful anymore; everything is everywhere, you're always stuck emailing the wrong people, and nothing ever seems to be where it needs to be.

What happened along the way? You can't even go a full thirty minutes without needing to check your inbox. The messages you receive are never as clear as they should be. You spend way too long emailing people about petty items. And you consistently put off messages you really shouldn't put off.

But alas, you've reached the point of no return; there's no going back. You must find a way to the other side of all those messages, attachments, and requests before it's too late, and you're permanently stuck in the sludge of downtime, angry coworkers, and neglected action items.

Here are a few tips to help you in your journey to the other side of the inbox.

Just get it over with.
It's way too easy to glance over an email and then the next and then the next and then the next… not really doing anything with any of them. This is a horrible habit and a surefire way to end up missing deadlines, misreading information, and gliding right past important requests. To eradicate this issue, handle each email as you read it, and if you aren't going to, then mark that email as unread.

Don't be too wordy.
Emails shouldn't be overflowing with content. In fact, the shorter the better. Fewer words also mean there's less of an opportunity for people to misinterpret your message, as well as your tone. You don't need to explain everything behind your message, and if you feel that you do, then you need to pick up the phone and make a call. Odds are that if you attempt to send someone a six paragraph email, they're going to send you an email asking you to call them.

Clean out your box.
If you receive an email that says "thanks" or "got it" or "Jim accepted your meeting request", do yourself a favor and delete them right away. There's no sense in holding onto messages like those. All they do is clog up your inbox, making it more difficult for you to search for emails that actually mean something.

Designate the time.
If you let it, your inbox can and will rule your life. It will consume every minute of every day, and your time will be spent "in-between" emails. Avoid this depressing possibility by sectioning off specific portions of your day for email, and do not allow this time to seep into the other parts of your day. Depending on how reliant you are on your inbox, this may differ. But a good place to start is about once every two hours spend 20 minutes checking your email. When this 20 minutes rolls around, you'll be motivated to legitimately process, organize, and respond to your emails.

5 quick tips to maintain your sanity during the workday

It's easy to go a little crazy when you work inside a building for eight or more hours five days a week. Whether you sit at a desk or you're merely restricted by four walls and a roof, it's hard for people to spend their days cramped up inside, shunned from vitamin D, fresh air, and natural light.

It's no wonder that when 5 pm rolls around, people exit their work buildings looking and smelling like they just awoke from a 10-year hibernation.

This doesn't even begin to touch on the fact that during these mind-numbing 40-hour weeks, you're surrounded by the same handful of people—people you may or may not like, and people you may or may not want to lock inside your supply cabinet... indefinitely.

Your coworkers combined with the horrid lack of vitamin D may cause you to momentarily forget the rules of proper office etiquette, and before you know it, you're wearing a loincloth and aggressively grunting to demonstrate your dominance. We don't recommend this. Instead, here are 5 quick tips to help you maintain an accepted level of sanity during the entirety of your workday (Feel free to print them out and tape them to a wall somewhere).

1. Exit – Right about the time when you put your head in your hands and begin to massage your temples is when you need to exit the building. Get up and get out. Soak up the sun and remember what the outside world looks like again.

2. Stretch – Twist your back, grab an elbow, or touch your toes. Take about 20 seconds to stretch out the stress that's been building up over the workday. You'll feel more energized and significantly more prepared to face the rest of the day.

3. Color – Pick up a pack of Sharpies and a coloring book like this one. Coloring will help in those moments when you feel like your eyeball is about to spasm out of the socket. Rest your eyes, de-stress, and calm your mind.

4. Talk – If you feel your brain is about two seconds from exploding, drop the paperwork and have a conversation with a coworker (one that you like). Don't pick up those papers until you've laughed at least once.

5. Music – Sometimes the people you work with don't know when to stop talking, inducing migraines and impairing productivity. When this happens, pop in your headphones and turn up the tunes until their voice is entirely drowned out. Don't even let them know what you're doing. Let them continue to talk until their voice is too hoarse to work.

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Gadget of the month: Pantelligent

6 reasons Pantelligent is your new sous chef

Smart phones, smart cars, smart watches—what's next? How about a smart frying pan?

Pantelligent is exactly what it sounds like, an intelligent pan ready to turn your mediocre meal into a five-star feast. With rave reviews and smart technology, it's more than a pan; it's a certified sous chef, and here's why:

1. Cook to perfection. Every time.

Using a precision sensor along the bottom of the pan, temperature is measured across the entire cooking surface to maintain a continuous and controlled amount of heat—the key ingredient to cooking perfection.

2. Keep your kitchen safe.

Smart technology means safe technology. If your pan begins to reach dangerously high temperatures, you will be alerted via the Pantelligent app—saving your food (and possibly your kitchen!) in the process.

3. Get real-time updates on your cooking progress.

Speaking of the app, it offer some pretty neat benefits. Choose from a variety of foods that you plan to cook, watch the cooking temperature in real time using an interactive algorithm, and get visual and audio prompts for when to flip and complete your cooking. Pantelligent adjusts cooking temperatures and times based on how you follow the steps. Or use the Freestyle Mode which allows you to use the temperature graph to cook the way you choose.

4. Less power = more cooking.

Pantelligent only requires three AAA batteries, which go in the ergonomic handle that remains cool to the touch no matter how hot the pan gets. Those three little batteries last 12 months—that's a lot of cooking!

5. It knows recipes.

On the Pantelligent app, find a variety of recipes backed by a time and temperature profile. The step-by-step instructions, ingredient prep and temperature graph guarantee you'll have a perfect meal in minutes.

6. It's smarter than you.

Don't feel ashamed—feel inspired to cook. This smart pan takes the stress out of dinnertime with simplified recipes and real-time tracking that are just a click away.

How do
Hackers Hack?
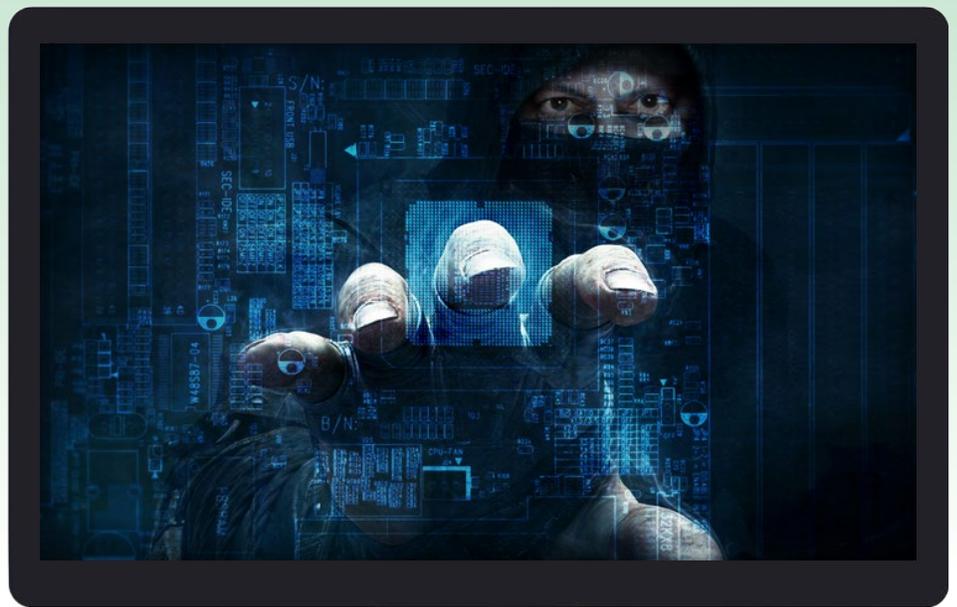
We hear about hackers hacking all the time. But how do they really do this? What is the actual "hack" of the matter?

There are plenty of ways a hacker can get what they want from a company, a person, or an agency, but here are a few of the most popular methods of attack.

Social Engineering

This category is especially stressful because social engineering is not thwarted by super tough software or a ridiculously prepared security firm. Social engineering exploits the individual people inside an organization; it's one of the cheapest and most effective ways a hacker can get what he or she wants. But what exactly is social engineering?

Social engineering is a special form of intrusion that can entail a variety of actions that use manipulative tactics to encourage people to drop standard security protocols. Anything from downloading a malicious link to conveying login credentials over the phone to holding your passcode-protected door open for the next person is considered social engineering. In these situations, hackers utilize social techniques to make you 'do' or 'say' something you normally wouldn't do or say.

For example, a man calls you on the phone and claims to be a technician from your internet provider. He says there's an issue with the network, and to make sure your business is unaffected by this problem, he needs your admin's login credentials. He assures you that everything will be super quick, and you'll avoid a lot of downtime. Appearing to be a no brainer, you quickly hand over your credentials not knowing this technician is really a hacker from across the country. Instead of avoiding downtime, you just created a lot of it… by handing over the keys to all your data.

Vulnerabilities

Software, browser, and system vulnerabilities are an easy in for hackers. Kaspersky Lab states that a vulnerability "is associated with some violation of a security policy." This violation allows cyber criminals to hide malicious code, unauthorized commands, or malware onto your computer.

The majority of vulnerabilities are eliminated when (or if) you update your workstation; however, many people fail to update their PC with the recommended updates when they become available (choosing to postpone or ignore a critical update). For example, about 30% of users are using an outdated browser, and nowadays, with vulnerability hacking like Malvertising, outdated browsers are creating an even bigger security concern.

With Malvertising, cyber thieves purchase ad space on a website and embed code in the ad. When you land on a website with a malicious ad, the imbedded code will search your computer for vulnerabilities and push malware into them. You don't have to click or view the ad to be infected; you simply have to visit the website. And the worse part about Malvertising is that it can be any website—rare or well-known. Google, Yahoo, Reuters, Forbes, The Daily Mail, and Huffington Post have all been previous victims of Malvertising—potentially infecting millions of people in less than a few hours.

The best defense against vulnerabilities is to make sure that all your technology is up-to-date at all times. Check your browser, operating system, software, and applications for updates on a regular basis and never postpone an update when one becomes available.