**Reduce Information Intake**

Tip Sheet #12 from *Doing the Right Things Right* by Laura Stack

The only way to overcome "infobesity" is to triage merci­lessly, reducing the amount you take in forever. Keep these tips in mind as you work toward stemming the info-tide.

1. **Limit Your Exposure to External Information at Work.** Instead of checking social media during your lunch and breaks, actually take those breaks. Eat, talk to people, go for a walk—just get away from your desk. You have enough work-related information to deal with. If you check the news, don't let links and ads to drag you off in unproductive directions.
2. **Check Your Email As Little As Possible.** Focus on email several discrete times a day, rather than keep­ing your inbox open and constantly monitoring it. I process email five to seven times a day, getting the inbox down to zero (using Outlook's "Move to Tasks" functionality), reprioritizing accordingly, and then working for a focused period. During that period, I don't check email, I turn my smartphone to airplane mode, and forward my calls to voicemail. Setting email filters, blacklists, and whitelists also help.
3. **Employ the Right Means of Communication.** Sometimes it's most efficient to pick up the phone rather than continuing an email volley. In other cases, noth­ing beats a face-to-face meeting. Rather than waste time and increase unnecessary information, carefully select the most efficient means of communication for each issue.
4. **Hone Your Online Research Skills.** Take advantage of Boolean data type operators online and other simple shortcuts to streamline info-searches and return fewer, better-targeted results.
5. **Maximize Reading Time.** If you have a lot of material to wade through, adopt a speed-reading system such as J. Michael Bennett's rhythmic perusal method. Carry around material for downtime reading as printouts in your briefcase, PDFs on your iPad, or eBooks on your Kindle. That way, you can catch up whenever you're stuck in traffic, standing in line, or waiting in the doctor's office.

**Grabbing a Lifeline**

If you ever find yourself paralyzed by information overload, scale back as far as you possibly can. Ideally, you'll end up well below your overwhelm threshold. Then you can start add­ing back information sources one at a time, gradually refining your ability to handle each until you feel you can add another. Maintain the methods I've outlined here, and you'll find it easier to handle the inflow in the future.

Laura Stack, MBA, CSP, CPAE, aka The Productivity Pro®, gives speeches and seminars on sales and leadership productivity. For over 25 years, she’s worked with Fortune 1000 clients to reduce inefficiencies, execute more quickly, improve output, and increase profitability. Laura is the author of seven books, including *Doing the Right Things Right: How the Effective Executive Spends Time*. See [www.3TLeadership.com](http://www.3TLeadership.com).