e-nough alre@dy

STOP BAD EMAIL

THE GROSSMAN GROUP | LCWA Research Group

This report provides a fresh perspective about work-related email based on quantitative data collected from corporate executives in Fortune 1000 companies, middle managers, supervisors and employees as part of the 2012 Work-Related Email Perception Study. We've seen all the reports in the media—people being overloaded by their inboxes, companies banning internal email and employees prohibited from using email outside business hours. The results of this pioneering quantitative study challenge what others are saying. ***Simply stopping workplace email is not the answer.***

Click to share!

Executive Summary

A recent quantitative study assessing the perceptions of work-related email from the view of corporate executives, managers, supervisors and non-supervising employees reveals *three key findings:*

1) *Email is an effective internal communication tool.* Corporate executives, managers, supervisors and non-supervising employees overwhelmingly agree that email is an effective way to exchange information at work.

2) *Workplace email needs an overhaul, but it should not be eliminated.* Many leaders and employees agree that email needs to be improved by reinforcing email etiquette/rules. Few say that email should be eliminated outside business hours. Managers, supervisors and employees spend thousands of minutes a year on irrelevant emails—a loss in productivity and wages at work.

3) *Managers are especially affected by email misbehaviors.* Managers are significantly more likely to say work-related email needs to be improved, and it may be affecting their engagement-level. They have many issues with work-related email outside business hours. Moreover, they spend more time than non-supervising employees on emails and irrelevant emails.

Should organizations follow the lead of some well-known companies and simply pull the plug on internal email after business hours? Or should they ban it completely?

Chicago Tribune

Banning email at work
What message is it sending?

After-Hours E-Mail Ban Swells Brazil Cost as Business Rues Latest Hurdle

Bloomberg

Volkswagen Gives Workers a Break from BlackBerry Email

abcNEWS

CNN | **Tech firm wants to ban office e-mail**

Our research shows that corporate executives, managers, supervisors and employees know email can be an effective and necessary way to share information at work. In fact, leaders and employees reveal that it is **email misbehaviors** that are giving email a bad name.

LCWA Research Group conducted web-based surveys of corporate executives, middle managers, supervisors and employees to investigate their perceptions of work-related email in February – March, 2012. 303 corporate executives (CEOs, Chairmen/Executive Vice Presidents and Vice Presidents) in Fortune 1000 companies completed an online survey. Separately, 306 managers, 181 direct supervisors and 510 non-supervising employees completed an online, panel survey. Quotas for managers and employees were established for gender according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Respondents represent companies from a variety of industries.

This is a comprehensive research study that investigates perceptions of work-related email from employees at various organizational levels—from the C-suite to the cubicle. The quantitative research yields three, key findings about work-related email—the results provide new perspectives on the value of email communications.
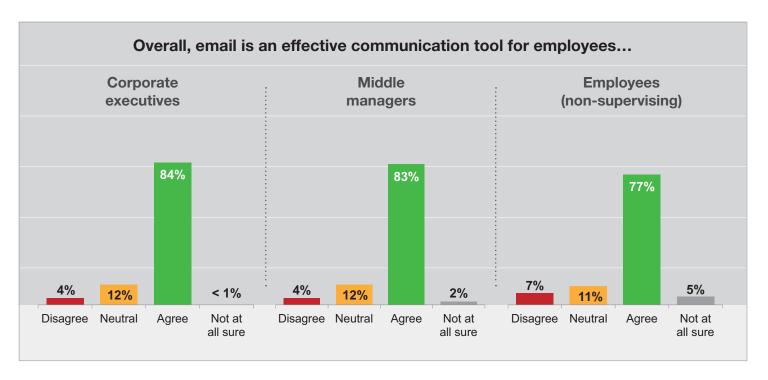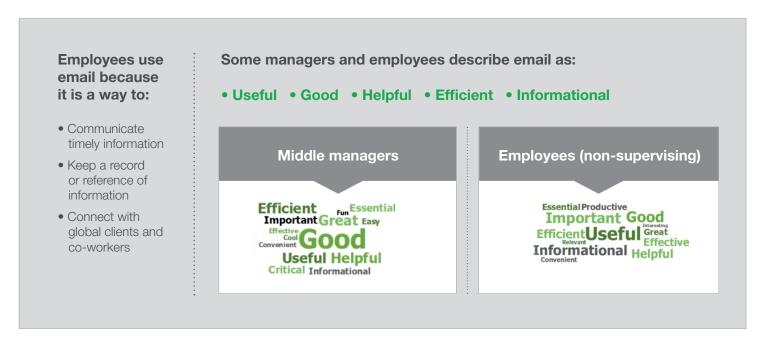
KEY FINDING *1:*

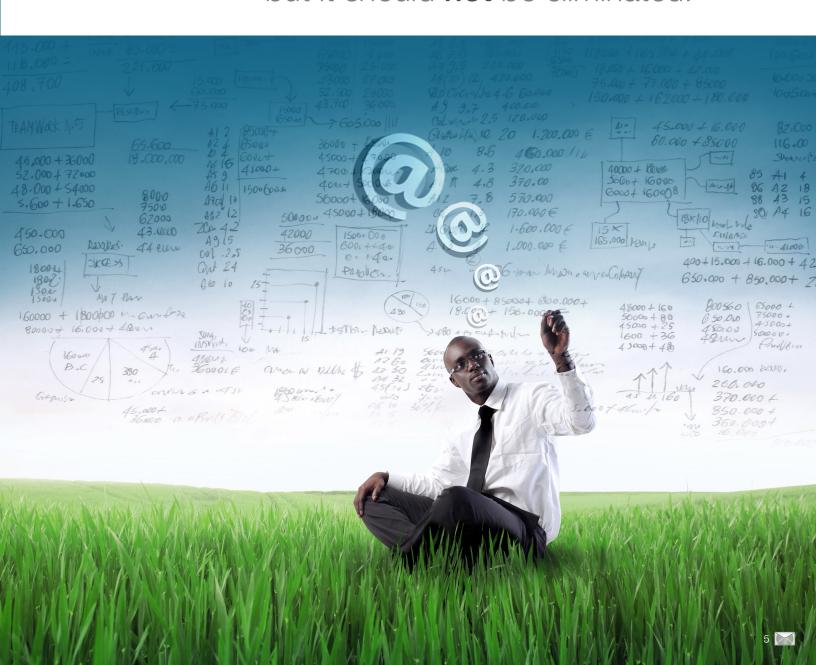Email is an effective internal communication tool.

Corporate executives, managers, supervisors and non-supervising employees overwhelmingly agree that email is an effective way to exchange information at work. Email is a crucial way for employees to communicate in many companies and organizations.
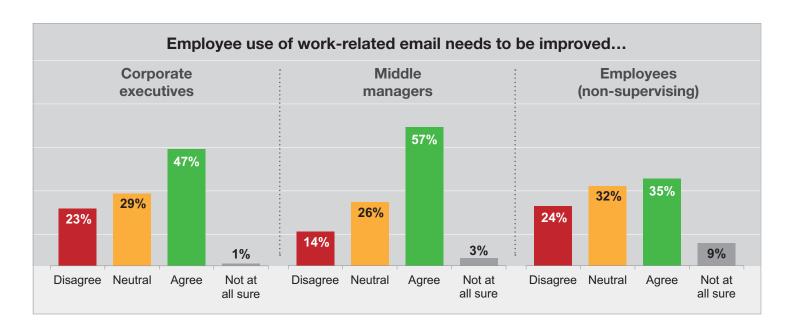
Overall, email is an effective communication tool for employees…

Corporate executives	Middle managers	Employees (non-supervising)

Corporate executives
- Disagree: 4%
- Neutral: 12%
- Agree: 84%
- Not at all sure: < 1%

Middle managers
- Disagree: 4%
- Neutral: 12%
- Agree: 83%
- Not at all sure: 2%

Employees (non-supervising)
- Disagree: 7%
- Neutral: 11%
- Agree: 77%
- Not at all sure: 5%

Employees use email because it is a way to:

- Communicate timely information
- Keep a record or reference of information
- Connect with global clients and co-workers

Some managers and employees describe email as:

- **Useful** • **Good** • **Helpful** • **Efficient** • **Informational**

Middle managers

Efficient Fun Essential
Important Great Easy
Effective
Cool **Good**
Convenient
Useful Helpful
Critical Informational

Employees (non-supervising)

Essential Productive
Important Good
Interesting
Efficient **Useful** Great
Relevant Effective
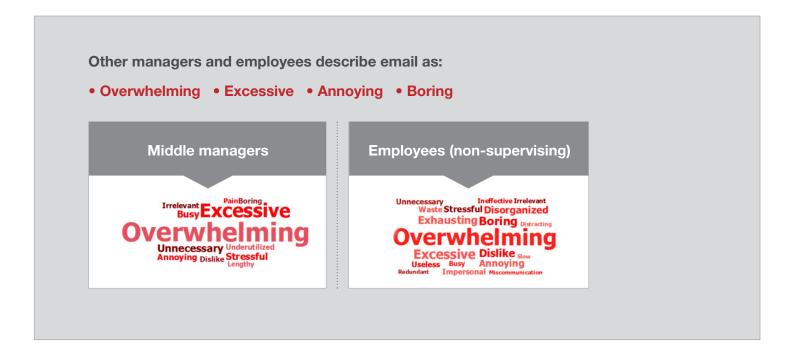**Informational** Helpful
Convenient

KEY FINDING *2:*

Workplace email needs an overhaul,
but it should **not** be eliminated.

Despite its effectiveness as a communication vehicle, a number of corporate executives, managers, supervisors and employees say it needs to be improved. Managers are significantly more likely than non-supervising employees to say email is not as effective as it could be.

Employee use of work-related email needs to be improved…

Corporate executives				Middle managers				Employees (non-supervising)			
Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Not at all sure	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Not at all sure	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Not at all sure
23%	29%	47%	1%	14%	26%	57%	3%	24%	32%	35%	9%

Other managers and employees describe email as:

• **Overwhelming**   • **Excessive**   • **Annoying**   • **Boring**

Middle managers

Irrelevant PainBoring
Busy **Excessive**
Overwhelming
Unnecessary Underutilized
Annoying Dislike **Stressful**
Lengthy

Employees (non-supervising)

Unnecessary Ineffective Irrelevant
Waste **Stressful Disorganized**
Exhausting **Boring** Distracting
Overwhelming
Excessive Dislike Slow
Useless Busy **Annoying**
Redundant **Impersonal** Miscommunication

6

On a typical workday, Managers spend significantly more time than their employee counterparts on work-related email during business hours and outside normal business hours. Also, they estimate spending an average of 24 minutes of their day on irrelevant emails—that's an estimated 6,000 minutes, or 100 hours, on irrelevant emails per work year for each manager!

Employees spend, on average, 45 minutes on email during normal business hours and 10 minutes on email outside normal business hours. Nearly 20 minutes of their day are spent on emails that are irrelevant to their work.

Average number of minutes spent on work-related emails on a typical day…	Middle managers	Employees (non-supervising)
	Mean	Mean
During normal business hours	74	45
Outside normal business hours	28	10
That are irrelevant to your work	24	17

* An approximate work year is 250 days (5 days per week x 52 weeks in a year – 10 holidays)

*That's an estimated **6,000** minutes (100 hours) each middle manager and **4,250 minutes** (71 hours) each non-supervising employee spends on **irrelevant** emails per work year!**

Many managers and employees describe email as:

• **Necessary** • **Fine** • **Okay**

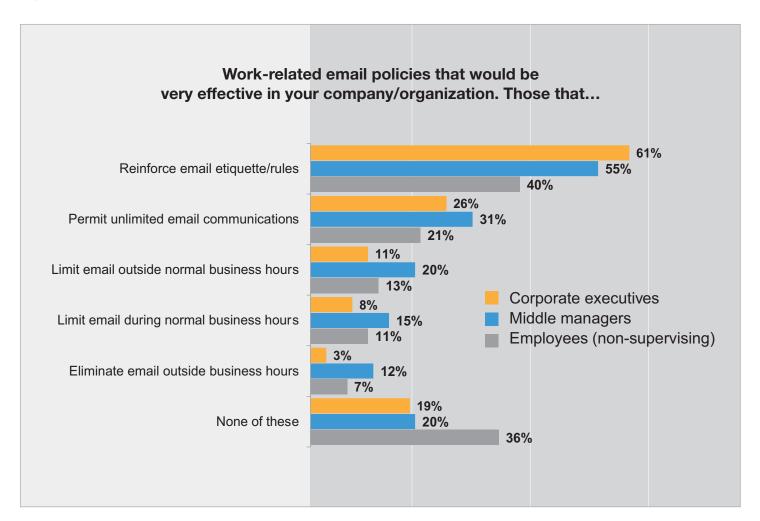**Middle managers**

Employees (non-supervising)

Will reducing email increase productivity? Some CEOs think so and are taking steps to limit or ban email. However, this quantitative research challenges the belief that banning email is the simple answer. According to this study, corporate executives, managers, supervisors and employees aren't exactly sure what the net impact would be if email is reduced at work. In fact, only 30 - 40 percent of respondents say they would get *more* work done if their company reduced the number of work-related emails.

Still, results show that managers and employees are spending time on irrelevant emails, and they think it should be improved.
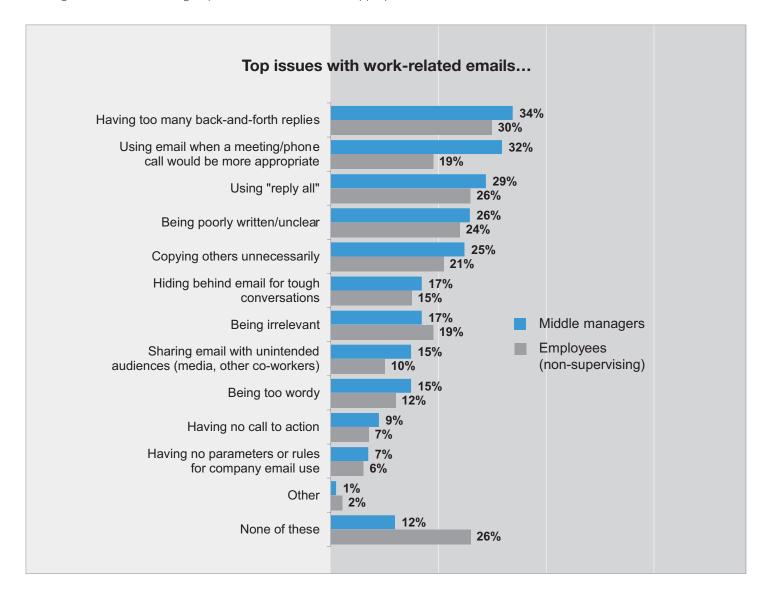
We asked corporate executives, managers, supervisors and employees what should be done about email in their companies and organizations. Very few say that email should be eliminated at work. In fact, higher percentages say to permit unlimited email communications. Interestingly, the highest percentages of respondents say reinforcing email etiquette/rules is the answer (61 percent of CEOs, 55 percent of middle managers, 58 percent of supervisors and 40 percent of employees). Managers are significantly more likely to say these policies would be very effective, compared to employees.

Work-related email policies that would be very effective in your company/organization. Those that…

Policy	Corporate executives	Middle managers	Employees (non-supervising)
Reinforce email etiquette/rules	61%	55%	40%
Permit unlimited email communications	26%	31%	21%
Limit email outside normal business hours	11%	20%	13%
Limit email during normal business hours	8%	15%	11%
Eliminate email outside business hours	3%	12%	7%
None of these	19%	20%	36%

Managers and employees say that the top issues with work-related email include a number of email misbehaviors—all that could be targeted by an organization-wide email etiquette policy.
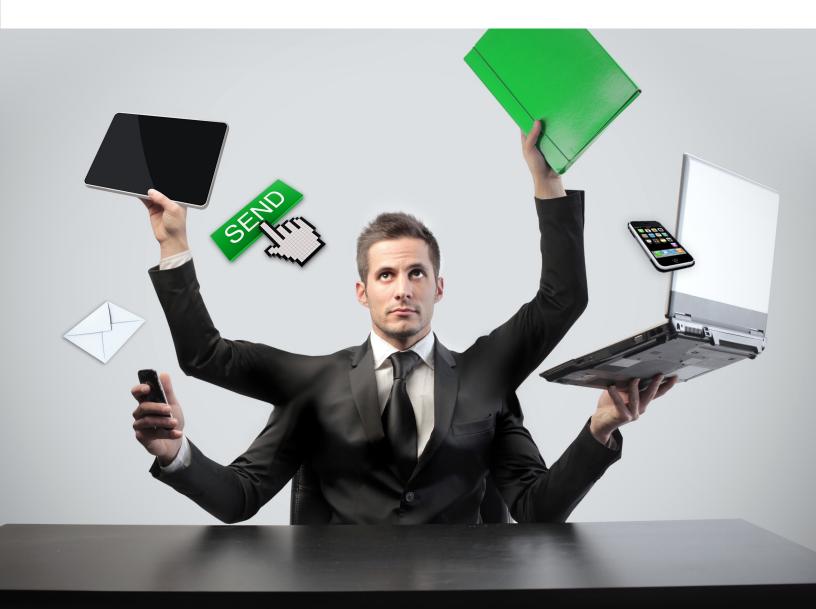
Respondents say employees misuse email and reply features:
• Having too many back-and-forth replies
• Using "reply all"
• Copying others unnecessarily
• Being poorly written or unclear
• Using email when a meeting or phone call would be more appropriate

Top issues with work-related emails…

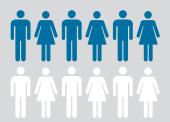| Issue	Middle managers	Employees (non-supervising)
Having too many back-and-forth replies	34%	30%
Using email when a meeting/phone call would be more appropriate	32%	19%
Using "reply all"	29%	26%
Being poorly written/unclear	26%	24%
Copying others unnecessarily	25%	21%
Hiding behind email for tough conversations	17%	15%
Being irrelevant	17%	19%
Sharing email with unintended audiences (media, other co-workers)	15%	10%
Being too wordy	15%	12%
Having no call to action	9%	7%
Having no parameters or rules for company email use	7%	6%
Other	1%	2%
None of these	12%	26%

KEY FINDING *3:*

Managers are especially affected by email misbehaviors.

A 2009 survey by The Grossman Group underscores the "frozen middle" that exists in many organizations. Senior leaders are well informed, but there's a significant gap between managers/supervisors and those who report to them.

It's ironic that those who need the most leadership and direction—those at the front lines—are being led in many cases by those who are the least qualified.
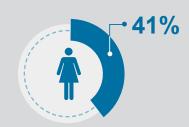
According to the national survey of employed adults with supervisors:

Only half of America's employees **(50%)** agree that their supervisors give them the information they need to do their job well

And even fewer employees—four in 10—feel their supervisor keeps them informed about what's going on in the organization **(42%)**

41%

Finally, only **41%** of employees feel their supervisor takes action on the ideas and concerns of his or her employees
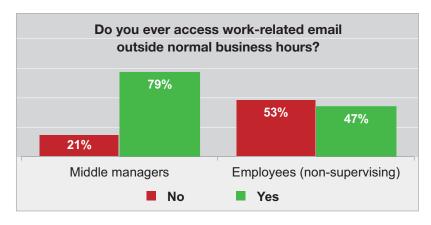
"
Senior leaders are well informed, but there's a significant gap between middle managers and those they supervise.
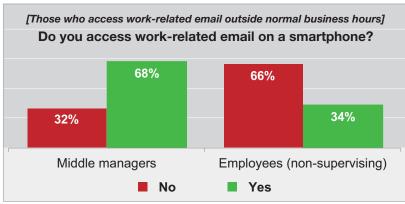
Not only are managers squeezed between a rock and a hard place, they also are stuck between their inboxes and outboxes.

Earlier results presented show that managers are more likely to say the use of email at their company needs to be improved, and they spend more time on email, compared to non-supervising employees. Managers are more likely than employees to say policies addressing email—including reinforcing email etiquette—would be very effective in their companies.

Interestingly, managers are significantly more likely than other employees to access work-related email outside normal business hours. Employees, supervisors and managers access email outside of work to:
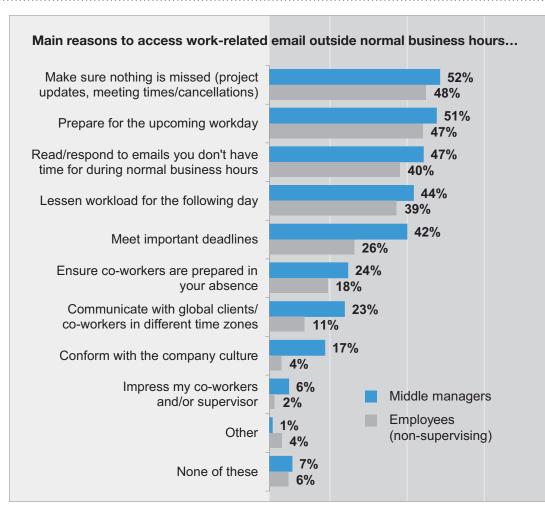
• Make sure nothing is missed

• Prepare for the upcoming workday

• Read/respond to emails they don't have time for during normal business hours

• Lessen the workload for the following day

Do you ever access work-related email outside normal business hours?

	Middle managers	Employees (non-supervising)
No	21%	53%
Yes	79%	47%

[Those who access work-related email outside normal business hours]
Do you access work-related email on a smartphone?

	Middle managers	Employees (non-supervising)
No	32%	66%
Yes	68%	34%

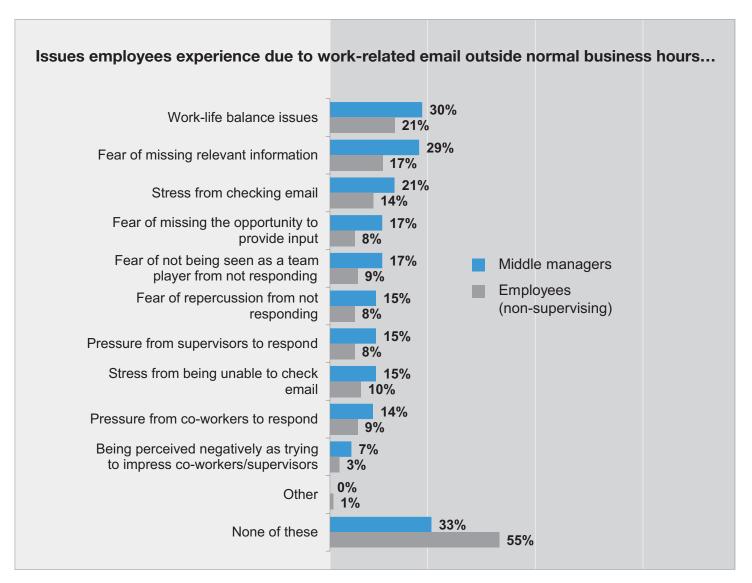Managers are significantly more likely than other employees to use email outside business hours to:

• Meet important deadlines

• Connect with global clients/co-workers in different time zones

• Conform with company culture

• Impress co-workers and/or supervisors

Main reasons to access work-related email outside normal business hours…

Reason	Middle managers	Employees (non-supervising)
Make sure nothing is missed (project updates, meeting times/cancellations)	52%	48%
Prepare for the upcoming workday	51%	47%
Read/respond to emails you don't have time for during normal business hours	47%	40%
Lessen workload for the following day	44%	39%
Meet important deadlines	42%	26%
Ensure co-workers are prepared in your absence	24%	18%
Communicate with global clients/co-workers in different time zones	23%	11%
Conform with the company culture	17%	4%
Impress my co-workers and/or supervisor	6%	2%
Other	1%	4%
None of these	7%	6%

The repercussions of using email outside normal business hours experienced by the highest percentages of respondents include many engagement-related areas:

- Work-life balance issues
- Fear of missing relevant information
- Stress from checking email

Moreover, significantly higher percentages of managers say they experience these issues, compared to other employees, who are more likely to say they do not face these engagement-related issues.

Issues employees experience due to work-related email outside normal business hours…

Issue	Middle managers	Employees (non-supervising)
Work-life balance issues	30%	21%
Fear of missing relevant information	29%	17%
Stress from checking email	21%	14%
Fear of missing the opportunity to provide input	17%	8%
Fear of not being seen as a team player from not responding	17%	9%
Fear of repercussion from not responding	15%	8%
Pressure from supervisors to respond	15%	8%
Stress from being unable to check email	15%	10%
Pressure from co-workers to respond	14%	9%
Being perceived negatively as trying to impress co-workers/supervisors	7%	3%
Other	0%	1%
None of these	33%	55%

What do you think?

Should email etiquette policies be implemented in your organization? Our research shows that the greatest cost to companies is generated from irrelevant emails and impacts middle managers the most. More leaders and communicators are depending on quantitative email assessments—rather than personal experiences or hunches—to determine the state of email in their organizations, and the actions needed to increase effectiveness. Organizations need to assess how email is used, including which behaviors are most pervasive, time-consuming and costly to develop an organizational email strategy. Email assessments quickly and cost-effectively identify the top issues with email in an organization and provide information for fact-based communication strategies.

Looking to assess email within your organization? We have a quick and cost-effective way to identify top issues with email. We'll provide you with a breakdown of how email is used (and abused) in your organization and provide solutions for fact-based communication planning.

www.yourthoughtpartner.com/email-diagnostic

Conclusion

Eliminating email and email abuses isn't the ultimate solution to improving employee engagement, work-life balance, and productivity. Really, it's a Band-Aid because the much
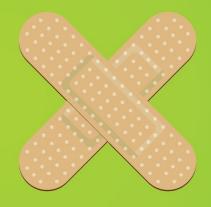
larger issue

is about ineffective communications inside organizations today, which is negatively affecting business results.

Assess your organization's communication climate system using the *Internal Communications Climate Index*™

Contact **LCWA Research Group** or
The Grossman Group for more information

Click to share!

About LCWA

The LCWA Research Group is a division of L.C. Williams & Associates, a full-service public relations, research and communications services firm.

LCWA's research capabilities range from employee communication and engagement assessments to marketing and branding studies, consumer surveys and association member satisfaction and development studies. LCWA designs qualitative and quantitative projects, conducts and manages data collection, analyzes data, and develops fact-based recommendations, plans and messaging.

At the core of LCWA's communication assessments is the firm's Internal Communication Climate Index™, which focuses on five critical dimensions of effective organizational communication: Mutual Purpose, Employee Advocacy, Information Flow, Senior Leadership and Direct Supervisor.

....

About The Grossman Group

Led by David Grossman—one of America's foremost authorities on communication and leadership—The Grossman Group (www.yourthoughtpartner.com) is an award-winning Chicago-based communications consultancy focusing on organizational consulting, strategic leadership development and internal communication.

The Grossman Group's experienced **thought**partners leverage the Grossman Methodology—a suite of proprietary tools, training, and consulting services—to unleash the power of strategic internal communication to drive business results.

A certified diversity supplier, The Grossman Group works closely with Fortune 500 companies including Accor, AOL, Boeing, GlaxoSmithKline, HTC, IDEXX, LifeScan (a Johnson & Johnson Company), Lockheed Martin, McDonald's, Microsoft, Rockwell Automation and Pioneer Hi-Bred (a DuPont Business), among others.