

How to Keep from Drowning in Information Without Missing What You Really Need to Know

All of us have a lot of information to process in our daily lives. Information is readily available – almost too readily available – and healthcare is exploding with information that must be read, processed, prioritized, and sometimes filed for future reference.

During the course of the day, I typically skim, read and sometimes participate in:

- Google News (and sometimes Fast Flip)
- Google+
- Listserv email
- Business and personal email
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Facebook

Yikes! It is so easy to spend a hours consuming new information every day and still feel that you've missed something. So how does a manager stay current without spending the entire day reading and organize information so you can find it when you want it?

Here are five things I do to manage information:

1. Slim your reading down with the **Unsubscribe Rule**. If you've received three emails from a person or company or newsletter and nothing in the three interested you, unsubscribe. It's not worth subscribing if you have to look at more than 3 emails to receive something of value. The time-to-value ratio is not working for you. Don't forget to also **unsubscribe to magazines**. I've

stopped reading professional magazines and paper newsletters as I really believe there is nothing in them that I can't find online.

2. **Use Instapaper** to easily file away articles for later consumption. Instapaper is a free program my son told me about that allows me to click on web articles I am interested in but don't have time to read. Once I click, the articles are filed for me to read later. Sometimes just the thought that I've captured something that I might need later satisfies me and when I check back in, it seems clearer what I need to attend to and what I can just delete.
3. **Set email rules and filters, prioritize and label.** Use the tools in your Outlook (good tips [here](#)) or gmail (good tips [here](#)) to organize your email and make sure you can find what you need when you need it. I automatically move listserv and LinkedIn notifications into separate areas so I am not tempted to get distracted by topics and conversations when I need to focus on the task at hand. You can also use the digest version of a listserv and get just one email a day from each group you belong to.
4. Delete liberally. **You can always Google it.** If the information isn't immediately important, you can always Google it later. Unless the information is very obscure, most information can be found on demand by searching.
5. **Set aside time to read and process without interruptions.** It takes 2 or 3 times as long to move through information if you're constantly interrupted. Put a note on your door that says "Do Not Disturb", push the Do Not Disturb button on your phone and close your door.

Here are a few more ways I organize information:

- If I start thinking about a project I am working on and have some ideas I want to jot down quickly, I will sometimes open/compose a new email and leave it in **draft form** until I am ready to cut and paste the information into a document or spreadsheet.
- If I come across something I really want to read and absorb but just don't have the time, I will copy the article's web address (url) and paste it into **my calendar** for a less-busy day so I won't forget to look at it.

How do you keep from drowning in information and make sure you separate the good stuff from the junk?