Using Your Inbox as a To-Do List

Why you need your Inbox to show you
only __what__ you want to work on...only __when__ you want to work on it

I bet that we have the same problem.

We spend the majority of our working day at our computers. We spend busy days at work…. but end the day asking ourselves…

> *Did we get the right work done today?*
> *Are there more important things that I should have worked on?*
> *Why do I feel like I may have wasted my day?*

Most of us have tried to follow the advice of productivity gurus to be better organised and to get things done.

We've tried using the Outlook Calendar and the Outlook Tasks list…. but all the methods take too much will-power and discipline (I've actually stopped looking at my Outlook Task list because it makes me feel bad… there are now too many things in that list that I know I will never do).

In the end…we go back to using our Inboxes as our main To-do List!

We recently surveyed more than 30,000 Outlook users on this topic.

Our survey confirmed that most Outlook users were in fact using their Inboxes as their primary to-do-lists. It also revealed a number of major short-comings of the Inbox when used in this way.

Despite these problems, the Inbox was still the best solution, because it is so much more IN-OUR-FACE! We don't need to remember to go to our Inbox. Most of us find ourselves looking in our Inboxes automatically (usually too many times)

Let's not fight it anymore.
The Inbox is our To-Do list.
Let's find a way to __make it work better__!

The first step to making anything better is to work out what the problems are. We analysed the responses to our survey and came up with the following key problems that users need solved.

#1. Our Inboxes are overloaded!

Our inboxes are full of emails… and only some of these are action items. As a result, too many things end up NOT getting done. *Emails that need our action are drowning in the ocean of emails in our Inboxes.*

#2: There is no way to prioritize or schedule emails in a more meaningful order.

Emails that we need to take action on are falling off the list. We don't necessarily want to work on emails in the order that they were received. We need a way to prioritize or schedule the emails in an order that makes more sense than the received date of the emails.

#3: There is no easy way to view (or adjust) your work schedule when you work from your Inbox.

This may be another way of restating the previous point but I think it is worth stating differently. Our Inbox does not make it easy to see what we have planned for the day, week etc…

#4: There is no easy way to add notes to an email to remind yourself later why you actually left the email in the Inbox.

How often do you find yourself looking at an email in your Inbox and wondering why it is still there… what did you plan to do with it?

#5: What about emails that I have sent that I need to follow-up on?

An important part of getting our work done is ensuring that other people respond to emails that we send. We need a way of being reminded to follow-up with people if they don't respond within a certain time. Outlook's reminders can do this but it would be much nicer to just see it in our Inboxes.

How have users been using the Inbox until now?

We have been working on a solution that solves ALL the problems identified above. Before that here's a summary of some things that Outlook users are currently doing to try and get around some of the problems identified above.

! **Keep emails marked as Unread until they need your attention:** This makes the emails that still need your attention more visible as they have a bold font. However if you have a full Inbox, these emails can easily get lost by falling off the list. It is also very easy to accidentally mark them as read by clicking on them while reading emails. Finally there is no way to prioritize them aside from manually each time.

! **Using Flags and Reminders:** It is possible to put Follow-up flags on emails and even set reminders. While this makes it easier to see which emails need your attention, it has similar disadvantages to marking emails as unread.

! **Creating and using folders for different priorities:** This will only work for users who have the discipline to follow the system. The hard thing is not shifting emails out of the Inbox… the difficult thing is to remember to go and look in those folders later.

! **Using Categories and Colors:** It is possible to use Outlook to set categories to indicate different priorities.

! **Converting emails to tasks or appointments:** This is easily done by dragging emails to the Calendar or Tasks folder in Outlook. The problem however is that your Tasks list and Calendar can very easily get cluttered to the point of being almost unusable.

Another difficulty that many users reported (and one that I personally relate to) is that many of us are not in the habit of looking at our Calendar or Task folders. As a result the action emails end up sitting in these folders without any action being done at the required times.

While the above solutions all work to a certain degree, they don't fully solve all the problems identified.

They still require too much manual work on the user's part.

The PERFECT Solution!
In order to use the Inbox as a To Do List you NEED to:

✔ Have a way of removing emails from the Inbox until they are needed.

✔ Have a way of prioritizing and scheduling when you work on emails.

✔ Have a way for emails to automatically come back to the Inbox when they are needed.

✔ Have a way for sent mails that you need to follow-up on to come back into your Inbox at the right time

✔ Have a way to view emails (to-dos and follow-ups) in the Inbox and in the order that you want to work on them.

✔ Have a way to review and reprioritize emails that you have planned to work on in the future.

✔ Do all this from you Inbox WITHOUT changing your setup or making you work differently!

We have been working on a solution
that solves ALL the problems identified.

My team has been using alpha and beta versions of this over the last few months and we're almost ready for launch. We're making some last minute changes based on our survey.

We will be releasing more information on this over the next week or so… either as a video or another report (let us know what format you prefer).

OH NO! He is trying to SELL us something!

I see little value in me just telling you what the problem is without offering a solution. I'll be honest … I'll be extremely happy if you decide to purchase, our new product.

But even if you don't want our solution to this problem, I recommend that you view the report/video we are releasing next week.

And if you skipped to this section without reading the report… please go back and read it now.

If you decide NOT to purchase our solution, the next video/report will still show you what you should DEMAND in any solution you do choose.

Thank you for your time … and I look forward to helping deliver more time to you every day.

Regards
Sanjay Singh

PS: You don't have to buy anything but you owe it to yourself to at least have a look at this new solution. Also please let us know 1) what do you think of this report and 2)if you prefer to get a written report like this or a video showing the solution at work.