



PRESS RELEASE

27 November 2009: International No E-mail Friday *Kicking the e-mail habit for just one day*

25 November 2009 – Next Friday, individuals and companies are requested to send no e-mails---or at least as few e-mails as possible. With International No E-mail Friday, Gunnar Michielssen, communications consultant and initiator of the project, aims to raise awareness among individuals and companies about the over-use of electronic mail. In order to help people avoid the e-mail trap, Michielssen has made a short video with some useful tips.

E-mail has come to be threatened by its own success. The number of e-mails has increased frightfully, at the expense of efficiency and personal contact. Also, our psychological health is suffering from e-mail traffic; more and more, the terror of e-mail is considered to be the cause of excessive stress, burn-out, and worse. Due to the increased use of PDAs, Blackberries and similar devices used to send and read e-mails at any time of the day, the problem is getting worse.

On No E-mail Friday, important and urgent messages must be transmitted face-to-face or by phone. *“Colleagues who usually don’t speak to each other will be forced to communicate in a more personal way next Friday. A day without e-mails breaks the routine of work and makes employees conscious of their behaviour,”* says Michielssen. *“All companies should ban e-mail at least one day per year. That’s why we urge people not to read or send e-mails on the last Friday of November.”*

Is this initiative an exaggeration? Gervais Pellisier, Chief Financial Officer of France Telecom, recently declared that the high number of employee suicides which the telecom company has seen the last several months could have been caused by a tsunami of electronic messages. *“It was not clear to what extent e-mail contributed to the problem, but no one can deny that the France Telecom employees were under strong pressure from the new electronic media,”* says Pellisier.

Companies also suffer financially from e-mail overload. The US research agency Basex estimated that this year, inefficient e-mail usage will cost the American economy about 900 billion US dollars. This cost is primarily due to

the large number of trivial or useless e-mails, and to the time employees need to restart and recuperate after each interruption of work---however small.

Better E-mail Hygiene

“International No E-mail Friday may sound too extreme to some, but it is something which is easily achievable because there are a lot of other means of communication at our disposal. It would be absurd to think that one day without e-mail would be the end of the world,” says Michielssen. *“The contrary is true. It is the ideal strategy to rediscover the added value of direct contact or other communication tools such as the telephone.”*

For the occasion of International No E-mail Friday, Gunnar Michielssen has made a short instructional video with practical tips to teach employees how to deal more efficiently with electronic media and e-mails in particular. The video can be downloaded for free at www.noemailfriday.org.

Brussels-based communications consultant Gunnar Michielssen helps companies like Belgacom, Puratos, Janssens-Cilag and Lu to adjust their e-mail culture. He is also the inventor of ‘Kicking the e-mail habit’, a training program which urges employees to use e-communication tools more efficiently. More than 6,500 people have participated in these training sessions over the past two years.

www.noemailfriday.org.

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