Episode #26: The Secret to Only Checking Email Once a Week—And Getting More Done!

THE
Blissful
MOMPRENEUR

Cristina: Hello, and welcome back to another episode of the Blissful Mompreneur podcast. I'm your host, Cristina Hall and I'm so grateful you're tuning in today. In 2019 and 2022, I baby proofed my small business to not only run without me, but to thrive without me so I could take two four month maternity leaves to be with my babies. Now I'm on a mission to help you do the same. Today I'll be sharing how to stop being a slave to your email inbox so that you can reclaim your time and sanity by breaking free from the confines of that digital ball and chain.

I remember the days when I used to be in the studio inbox every single day. I found myself letting my inbox dictate my day. Instead of choosing what I wanted to work on, I spent hours clearing emails and had little time left for important projects. And when I was gearing up for my first maternity leave, I knew this wasn't sustainable if I wanted to spend quality time with my newborn. Something had to change.

After a lot of trial and error, I introduced a new system. We created a main email account that we give out to everyone. And then a personal one that I reserve for my team and vendors that need to contact me directly. This gave me the freedom to delegate the main inbox to my administrative assistants without me needing to check the inbox for the things I was responsible for.

In today's episode, I'll share my journey from an inbox obsessed small business owner to someone who responds to emails only once a

week. Yes, it's possible. And also how you can delegate this tedious task. I will share strategies, mindset shifts, and practical tips that can help you manage your inbox without letting it manage you. Trust me, if I can do it, so can you.

When I first started my business, I took on everything myself. And my inbox was no exception. I made it my mission to respond to every email within 24 hours, thinking I was being efficient and providing excellent customer service. But in reality, I was constantly tethered to my inbox and it began to control my entire day. I remember countless mornings opening my email first thing, only to find myself bogged down with responses and follow ups for hours. Any projects always took a backseat because I felt this overwhelming need to clear my inbox. The mindset was once I get through these emails, I can move on to bigger tasks. But the inbox never remained empty, and I was left with little time for anything else. Plus, I had the terrible habit of checking the inbox just before bed. And sometimes I'd see a complaint from a client that would leave me anxious and upset, which meant I didn't get any sleep that night. It was really unhealthy.

As my first maternity leave approached, I trained my administrative assistant to handle the inbox. But I was so afraid to let go. I micromanaged everything and often tried to clear the inbox before she even came in. I was so worried that no one could handle it as well as I could.

During my first maternity leave, despite having help, I couldn't fully give up control. I was still checking the inbox and responding to emails when I could. I let this sense of urgency dictate my actions, fearing I'd miss something important or that things would fall apart if I wasn't involved. Before my second maternity leave, I knew I had to approach things differently. So about six months prior, I made a firm decision to step back. I communicated to my admins that they would be handling the main inbox entirely. I logged out of the account on

my phone and retrained myself to break the habit of checking it multiple times a day. It wasn't easy and it certainly felt strange initially, but over time, I saw how capable my team truly was. They handled everything smoothly and I felt as though a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders.

The most surprising part of this transition was realizing that no one could mess up so poorly that I couldn't fix it. The more I trusted my team and saw things running smoothly, the more confident I became in their abilities. And if something did go wrong, it was a learning opportunity. We'd create a system to prevent that issue from happening again.

For example, we used to have an issue where new students wouldn't show up for their intro lessons. Since we had no way of collecting payment and still had to pay the teacher, we were losing money. We addressed this by creating a system where payment is collected at the time the lesson is scheduled over the phone. Problem solved.

Now, one of the most helpful steps was creating templates for everything from how to respond to lesson inquiries to handling cancellations and concerns. And these templates are always evolving. If we encounter an issue, I will rework the templates to avoid that issue again in the future. For example, when we switched to the membership model, new students that enrolled mid year often questioned how we prorated the first month. This confusion resulted in some people not enrolling. This had to be fixed. So I reworked the email templates to clearly outline how we prorate the first month. And once we did that, we saw much better conversion rates and overall improved student satisfaction and retention.

So for about two and a half years now, my administrative team handles the main inbox and I respond and clear my personal inbox once a week on Saturday mornings. I give it a quick scan daily just to

make sure I don't miss anything urgent, but this takes no more than five minutes. And now I have the entire day to focus on what matters most. It's been incredibly liberating.

Now, when I decided I wanted to completely delegate the inbox, my team wasn't ready. I had to train them while creating systems and templates for various scenarios. I began by training them to handle some of the basic correspondence around scheduling. Then I trained them how to handle questions about billing and eventually got them involved in the sales, onboarding and offboarding process. As I was training them, I created standard operating procedures for every process in the business, along with a variety of templates. Having templates not only ensured consistency in our communication, but also saved a significant amount of time. My team knew exactly what to say and how to handle different situations without having to reinvent the wheel each time.

Another reason why this transition went so smoothly was because I met weekly with my admins. This allowed me to discuss any challenges they were facing, gather feedback on our processes, so we can continuously improve our systems. And whenever we encountered a problem, I no longer tried to control the situation. Instead, I looked at it as an opportunity to improve the system around it. The transition definitely took time, but each step brought me closer to being free of the inbox.

Now, if you're listening to this and thinking, I need to do this, but I don't know where to begin, I'm going to give you some tips so you can start implementing today.

Start small. Begin by delegating less critical tasks to your team. This could be general inquiries or follow-up emails. Starting small allows you to gradually build trust and confidence in your team's abilities.

Create standardized templates. Develop email templates for common scenarios. This will save you time and ensure consistency in your communication. One of the best ways to do this is to turn each email you send into a template as you go through your day.

Trust your team. Trust is key to delegation. Remember, no one can mess up so badly that it can't be fixed. By trusting your team and giving them the tools and guidance they need, you empower them to handle tasks effectively.

Keep communication open. Maintain regular communication with your team. And schedule weekly or bi-weekly check-ins to discuss any challenges and gather feedback. This helps in refining your systems and ensures everyone is aligned.

Invest time in training. Make sure they're familiar with your systems and understand your expectations. Continuous training and development boosts their confidence and competence.

Break the habit. If you're used to checking your inbox constantly, train yourself to break that habit. Log out of the email app on your phone or turn off push notifications. This helps you resist the urge to check your emails constantly so you can stay focused on more important tasks.

Regularly review and update your systems and templates. Incorporate feedback from your team and adapt to any new challenges or changes in your business environment. Continuous improvement keeps your processes effective and relevant.

By implementing these tips, you can transform your email management from a time consuming chore to an efficient streamlined process. It may take some time and adjustments, but the results are worth it. You'll find yourself with more time to focus on

what truly matters. Growing your business, spending quality time with your family, and enjoying your maternity leave stress free.

If you have any questions or just want to say hi, please DM me on Instagram @theblissfulmompreneur. And if you found value in today's episode, I'd love for you to share it with a fellow mompreneur who might need to hear this. And if you haven't already, please subscribe and leave a review. It helps this podcast reach more amazing women like you. Thank you again for being here and until next time, keep pursuing your bliss.