

Success through Visual 5S for Emails

By Carolle Vargas

We have often seen the phrase “Success = Opportunity + Preparation”. Another common phrase is “The empty gives way to the full” – when our plate is overflowing we cannot take on any more. Interestingly both these beliefs are complementary. When you have room on your plate, you are prepared to take advantage of the opportunities. These two thoughts, applied to our emails through 5S, help us achieve success.

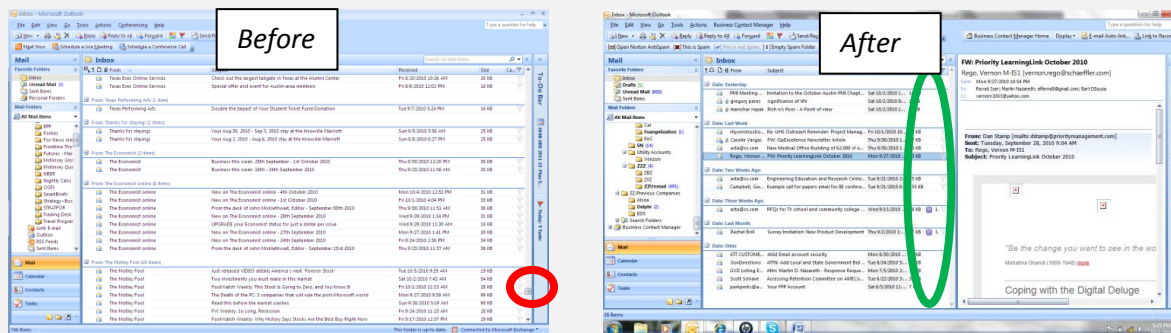
Let us look at a simple example. My son, a high-school sophomore, took pride in being a “procrastinator”. One day he realized that when he was ahead of his assignments and responsibilities, he “freed up space on his plate” and could spend more time with his friends and sports. Unfortunately, this revelation is not common to all. We either do not get ahead or we fill up our time with not-so-strategic activities, which keep us from taking advantage of opportunities that come our way.

A survey conducted by Priority Management indicates that 24% of the people say incoming emails interrupt them the most. We all are bombarded by emails. We are at a stage of email explosion. With the amount of emails I receive, I *could* easily spend over half a day on emails.

Well, the good thing is that we have some simple proven practices that help us get ahead of emails so that our plate is cleared, allowing us to take advantage of ever-increasing opportunities. Interestingly, these practices correlate well with the 5S that most of you are familiar with.

Applying the principles of 5S, “Sort-in” and “Sort-out”, on a regular and timely basis to our email system is a simple way to minimize the number of emails in the inbox. Additionally, the key is to have a simple visual standard that tells us whether we are ahead or behind.

The following example shows two inboxes. The inbox on the left (before) has an extremely small scroll bar indicating, in this case, over six hundred messages in the inbox—out of control!! The inbox on the right (after) does not have a scroll bar—in control. By limiting the “after” inbox to a pre-established visual size we are able to see at a glance our most important emails and take advantage of the opportunities that come our way.



This simple approach will keep you ahead and free up valuable time so you are ready and prepared for opportunities that come your way – Success!!!