

Background – Message 1

What is the problem?
 The increasing use of email has changed the behaviour in which employees deal with their workload, and where it was once seen to be relatively affordable and convenient communication tool, it is now seen as a source of workplace stress (Ingham 2003). Research indicates one in three workers now suffers from email related stress (Hair et al. 2007). It is suggested by some (Whittaker & Sidner 1996) that an employee's choice of email filing strategy could be directly related to and be one explanation for the rapid growth of email stress in the workplace.

What is email stress?
 Email stress is the perception that email has got out of control because it is received and sent more than one can handle, find, or process effectively (Dabbish & Kraut 2006). It is unsurprising that most research on email stress has been cast in terms of the mental strain, i.e. psychological impact it has on email users. What has yet to be examined is the nature of bodily changes that occurs when one is stressed, i.e. physiological reaction.

Research Methodology – Message 2

How can email stress be conceptualised?
 The Email Filing Framework (Figure 1) addresses the identified shortcomings of employee choice of email filing habits and the subsequent effect it has on workplace stress. It is intended to provide guidance on evaluating filing strategies and work towards understanding the effect of email stress on employee well being in the workplace, which undoubtedly impacts on effectiveness and quality of work (Dabbish & Kraut 2006).

Loughborough University

Know-How...

Email Stress Measuring Methodology

Laura Marulanda-Carter
 Department of Information Science
 Supervisors: Tom Jackson & Gill Ragsdell

How can email stress be measured?
 The data collection process consists of two phases. The first phase would be to collect psychological qualitative information on employee email usage, personality and workplace well being, through completion of questionnaires. The second phase would gather physiological quantitative data over a 48-hour monitoring period. For this the choice of stress indicators include blood pressure, heart rate and saliva cortisol.

How can the results be used to understand email stress?
 A unique profile combining details of all the stress measures, as indicated in the research design above, for each employee would be created. These profiles would then be mapped to validate the Email Filing Framework. Based on the complete results, the framework could also be extended to include employee personality and well being.

Attachment – Literature Cited

Dabbish, L.A. & Kraut, R.E., 2006. *Email overload at work: an analysis of factors associated with email strain*. [Paper in presented at Conference Proceeding of the 2006 20th Anniversary conference on computer supported cooperative work, Alberta, 4th November 2006].

Hair, M. et al., 2007. The influence of self-esteem and locus of control on perceived email-related stress. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23(6), 2791-2803.

Ingham, J., 2003. E-mail overload in the UK workplace. *Aslib Proceedings*, 55(3), 166-180.

Lazarus, R., 1998. *Fifty years of the research and theory of R.S. Lazarus: an analysis of historical and perennial issues*. New Jersey: Routledge.

Radicati Group, Inc., 2008. *Email Compliance: Get it right*. <<http://www.radicati.com/?p=1774>>, [accessed: 02.04.2010].

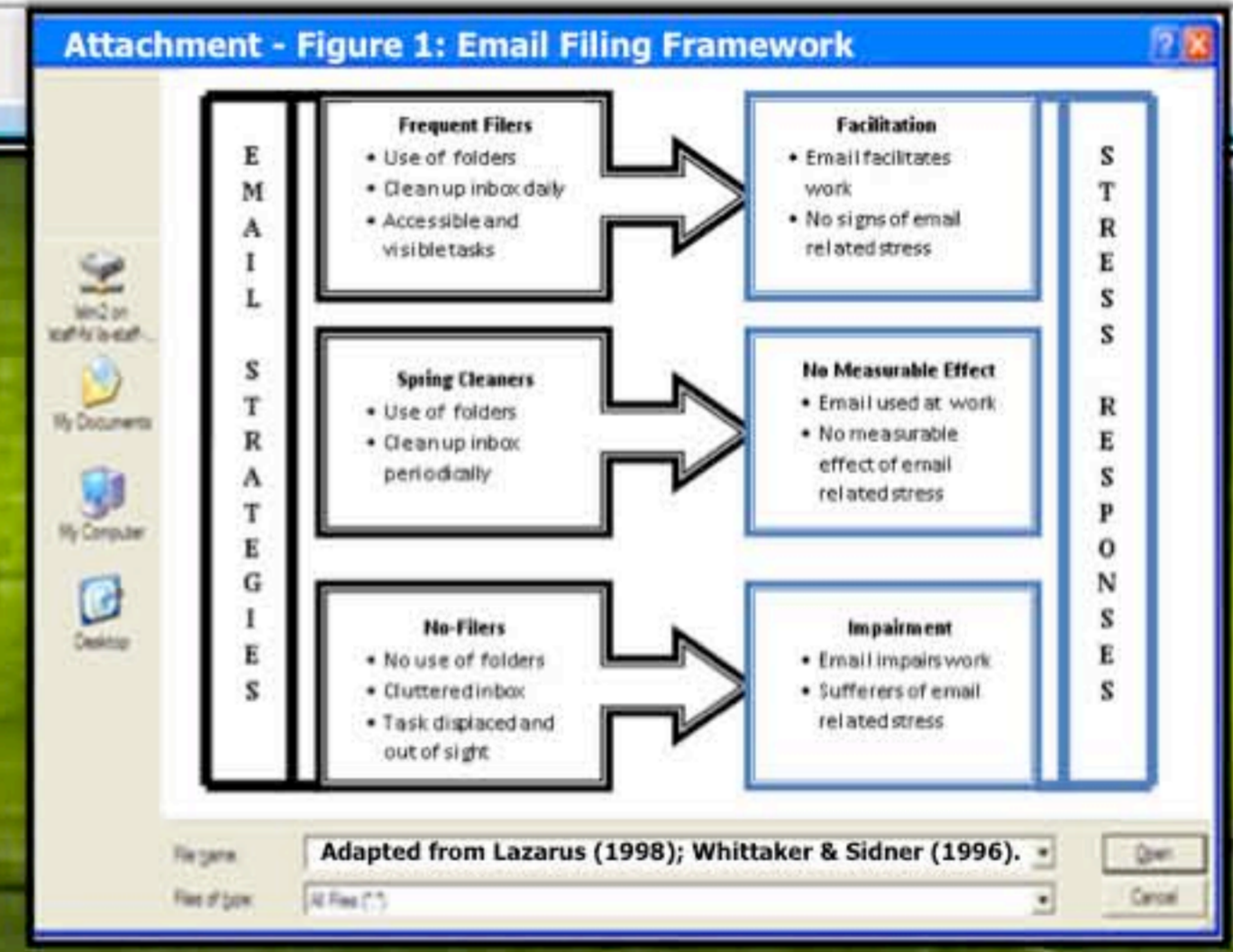
Whittaker, S. & Sidner, C., 1996. *Email overload: exploring personal information management of email* [Paper given at the Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, Vancouver, 13 April 1996].

Summary – Message 3

What is the purpose of this research?
 The severity of the email stress phenomenon has been plaguing the workplace and users alike. In an attempt to curb the increase of email stress occurring, this well needed research is two-fold. Firstly, in proposing a research methodology which identifies both physical and mental reactions to email stress unlike any other research to date. And also in developing and verifying a framework to further understand the implications of user behaviour that could be used in practice to minimise the email stress problem.

What does this mean for you as an email user?
 The Email Filing Framework aims to support employees and employers through:

- Email Training: To promote email etiquette and email literacy in and between organisations to improve communication.
- Email Policy/Guidelines: To support and propose best practice advice in email management and compulsory email conduct.
- Employee Well Being Initiatives: To minimise potential email stress claims in the future.



Since you began reading this ... an estimated 150 million more emails would have been sent. (Adapted from Radicati Group Inc, 2008)

