LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO MAXIMIZE EFFICIENCY

E-MAILS

E-Mail Inbox Management

Like folks in most lines of work, academic advisors send and receive a large volume of e-mails each day. Efficient management of one’s inbox is important to maximizing efficiency.

Prioritizing

Identifying and addressing e-mails that need attention immediately or quickly is the first step. Survey your inbox and determine what needs action now and what can wait. Be careful though—flag or mark in some way those that you need to come back to later.

Folders

Take advantage of the ability to create and name folders in a way that makes sense for you. As soon as you have addressed a particular e-mail (or if it is simply informational in nature), file it in the appropriate folder. That way, when you need to quickly access a particular e-mail, it will be right where you expect to find it!

Tricks of the Trade

It can be helpful to set aside blocks of times to send and respond to e-mails. Think about time frames that will work best for you. For example, do you prefer to check some things off your list first thing in the morning? Do you feel you do your best work at the end of the day?

At times, a student may reach out to you with a question or issue that would be best addressed by a face-to-face appointment. Look for opportunities to use a reply to draw students in for an in-office appointment when you deem necessary.

Inbox Management Tools

Most would likely agree that Microsoft Outlook 2010 is more easily searchable than its predecessor. If you feel like you need even more control and functionality in managing your inbox, contact your unit’s IT staff.

Troubleshooting

If you need assistance with anything regarding your e-mail, contact the Help Desk at (859) 218-HELP.
Official UK E-mail Address

Every student at UK is assigned an e-mail address. The University of Kentucky's student e-mail service is provided by Google Apps and Windows Live. These providers fall into the category of “cloud computing,” meaning applications, file storage and e-mail accounts are housed on off-campus servers and can all be accessed through a variety of devices such as laptops, smartphones and tablets. The e-mail services offer students expanded inboxes and additional collaboration and production tools, while costing the University less money than the previous e-mail service.

All students have been migrated from Exchange, the University's former e-mail provider, to “the cloud.” Students have the option to choose either a Google Gmail or a Microsoft Live account, but their Universal E-mail Address “John.L.Doe@uky.edu” remains the same.

The migration excludes Medical Center students in the Colleges of Dentistry, Health Sciences, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, and Public Health due to health information privacy regulations. UK student employees have the option to access an Exchange account for work purposes, but all other mail should be sent to the student's cloud account.

It is good practice to require students to send all mail from their official UK e-mail account and to send all e-mails to a student's official account.

Distribution Lists

E-mail can be a quite effective way to reach many students by sending just one message to all of them. Developing and maintaining appropriate distribution lists plays a big part in leveraging e-mail to reach our constituents.

Use distribution lists that make sense to you. What are the ways in which you can group students as you make your lists? Are there particular cohorts of students you work with? What about student leadership groups, such as ambassadors? Think about the folks who fall into certain categories that you will want to reach by sending an e-mail to a particular distribution list.

After you have made your lists, the work is not done. Keeping them up-to-date is an ongoing process. Adding and removing students when appropriate is a fundamental step with regard to distribution lists.

Out-of-office message

If you are out of the office, you may want to consider having an out-of-office message up. Some items you may wish to address with your message could include:
• Simply stating you are out of the office.
• Letting the auto-reply message recipient know when you will return.
• An assurance that you will reply to their e-mail as soon as possible when you are back in the office.
• A referral to and contact information for anyone needing immediate assistance while you are away.
• Noting any deadlines that may take place while you are away.
• Any additional information you feel may be helpful (e.g., contact information for other campus offices students may need in your absence, such as the Registrar’s Office around the last day to reduce course load or withdraw from the University).

Below is an example of an out-of-office message an academic advisor may use:

Hello and thank you for your e-mail. I am out of the office January 3 and 4. I will return on January 7 and will be happy to reply to your message as soon as possible upon my return.

If you need immediate assistance between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday-Friday please call (859) 257-**** or walk into (name of building) and ask to speak with (name of specific person, walk-in advisor, etc.).

Thank you and have a great day.

(Sign name)

• Additional helpful information

**E-mail signature**

Many advisors have an e-mail signature and they can take quite different forms. Think about the information that is helpful to include in yours. There may be things you simply want to include or that your unit leadership asks you to include, such as:

• Your name
• Your position
• Name of your Unit
• University of Kentucky
• Office Location
• Office Address
• E-mail address
• Office Phone Number
• Connection point to unit web site
• Social media connection points
• Information re: scheduling an appointment, walk-in hours (if applicable)

**Templates**

For every advisor, there are e-mails that we either a) send to all students at particular junctures in the academic year or b) e-mails that are sent to specific students that are mostly identical, with minor changes to tailor the e-mail to that individual. In either instance, it makes good sense to develop and save a template that can be quickly modified and tailored to the occasion or the particular student, then sent.

Here is an example of a template used to send reminder e-mails about the next day’s priority registration advising appointment and the need to complete an advising worksheet prior to the appointment:

*Hello! I am looking forward to our appointment tomorrow to talk about classes for the upcoming semester!*

*Please be sure to complete the attached worksheet and bring it with you tomorrow.*

*Thank you and see you soon! Have a great rest of your day!*

*(Advisor Name)*

**Connecting UK E-mail to Personal Devices**

If you have the ability to connect e-mail accounts to your cell phone or tablet, think about whether or not you want to connect your UK e-mail account to that device. To be sure, there are pros and cons to doing so:

**Pros**

• Maximizes connectivity to students and colleagues
• Affords one the ability to send and reply to messages while on the go
• Increases likelihood of staying as up-to-date as possible re: student needs and campus/office news and events

**Cons**

• May feel like one is seldom disconnected from work
• Viewing a particular message at night or on the weekend may cause distress

**Online Calendar**

Most, if not all, offices across campus utilize an online calendar system. Microsoft Outlook and Google Calendar are just two examples.
Leveraging these calendars can help you stay organized and coordinate your schedule with those of colleagues.

Think about colleagues that you will need to share calendars with, both in your unit and across campus. Doing so helps keep everyone in the loop and makes it much easier to organize meetings.

In addition to keeping up with meetings, appointments, and other obligations, an online calendar can also prove helpful in keeping you on-task and on-track. Building smaller tasks into your online calendar to help you make progress toward larger goals is a great way to leverage this technological resource.

**Google Drive (also known as Google Docs)**

Google drive is Google’s tool for editing, uploading, and sharing files. It serves as your virtual hard drive, where you can store and retrieve files your office needs. It’s almost the same as using your PC, except it stores all your information on a remote server. There, you and your colleagues can access information from any location with internet access. A few examples of ways to leverage Google Drive include:

- **Share your work with colleagues:** Any item in Google Docs (text documents, spreadsheets, presentations, images, audio/video files) can be shared with as many people as you would like. The owner of the item can determine whether each member of the team has edit or view-only access to specific items.
- **Collaborate in real time:** Instead of e-mailing a text document back and forth as updates are made, Google Docs allows you to view edits, make revisions, and add content to your pieces at the same time as your editor or co-author. Multiple people can edit and view items simultaneously from any location.
- **Make Use of the Advantages of a Web-Based System:** This means you can create a document on the office computer, but still edit it when working from home or on a laptop, smart phone, or tablet. There is also an offline mode available, but it has limitations and is only available if you are using Google Chrome as your web browser.
- **Organize your work efficiently:** Google Docs allows you to sort folders and labels, and also has a search function.

If your office would like to try Google Drive, you can get started at drive.google.com/start.

**Dropbox**
Dropbox is a web site where users can store files and modify them in a collaborative fashion. It is great for with colleagues around the office, across campus, or really, on the other side of the world.

The main page is www.dropbox.com. There, users can create a new account or log in to their existing account.

More information is available by watching the tutorial at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_ZvB0GE5_A.

**Doodle**

Doodle is an online meeting organizer. It allows those who will be participating in the meeting to indicate times when they are and are not available. It is especially helpful when trying to bring together several different folks, as it shows you exactly when the majority or all of the possible attendees are available.

The main page for Doodle is www.doodle.com.

Getting started is as easy as clicking “schedule an event”.

**Tracking Student Information**

Academic advisors must effectively manage and track a wide variety of student information. Tracking student alerts that are received and maintaining a list of students on academic probation for the current term are just two such examples.

Perhaps the most common method for keeping this information organized is utilizing spreadsheets, such as those in Microsoft Excel.

There are some spreadsheets that must be maintained for reporting within your unit or to other campus offices. Others, however, may simply prove helpful to you in your work. What are some spreadsheets you can develop and maintain to help you be a more effective advisor?

**Assessment and Information Gathering**

Individual advisors and advising units regularly find themselves of input from students and colleagues. More often than not, this data is needed for assessment purposes.

Surveys are one of the more common ways to capture input from a particular group. Qualtrics and SurveyMonkey are two common platforms for administering surveys.
Qualtrics

Qualtrics can be used to generate online surveys and is available for free download at https://download.uky.edu/.

SurveyMonkey

SurveyMonkey is comparable to Qualtrics in that it is an easy-to-use tool for generating various formats of online surveys. The main page is www.surveymonkey.com and the Basic version is free.

Both Qualtrics and SurveyMonkey generate a distinct URL that can be sent to all individuals being asked to take the survey and which provides access to the survey in its entirety.

Technology Help Desk

Students, faculty, and staff needing technology assistance should call the Help Desk at (859) 218-HELP.

VirtualDEN

VirtualDEN is a mechanism by which you can access a virtual desktop, thereby giving you access to software and applications available in-person in UK computing labs.

The home page is http://www.uky.edu/ukit/labs/VirtualDEN and http://www.uky.edu/ukit/virtualden/faq is the place to go to find answers to frequently asked questions about the application.

At http://www.uky.edu/ukit/labs/virtual-den-software, you will find a listing of all software applications that can be accessed via VirtualDEN.

UK Mobile App

The UK Mobile application is a great resource for students, faculty, and staff. Using the app, information about the following is at your fingertips:

- Directory
- Maps
- Library information
- Safety
- News
- Athletics
- Images
- Videos
Leveraging Technology to Maximize Efficiency

- iTunes U
- Blackboard
- Course Catalog
- myUK
- UK Alumni Association

Visit [http://m.uky.edu/](http://m.uky.edu/) for download information.

**Computer labs**

There may be instances where you will need to reserve a computer lab, such as for the UK 101 class you are teaching. [http://www.uky.edu/scslabs/classrooms/](http://www.uky.edu/scslabs/classrooms/) is the website to visit to reserve one of the many computer labs across campus.

**Home Page**

Every student, faculty, and staff member should bookmark the University’s home page, [www.uky.edu](http://www.uky.edu).

The directory and site index features will likely be two of the more commonly-accessed areas of the main page for you.

- One-stop shop
- Directory
- Site Index

**Registrar Web Site**

The Registrar’s website is also especially useful, containing pertinent information for advisors and students alike. You can access it at [http://www.uky.edu/registrar/](http://www.uky.edu/registrar/).

**Remote Desktop Access**

Visit [http://www.uky.edu/ukit/techtips/faculty/remotedesktop](http://www.uky.edu/ukit/techtips/faculty/remotedesktop) for more information on how to access your user-specific desktop at times when you are not in the office.

**Software Downloads**

Visiting [https://download.uky.edu/](https://download.uky.edu/) and entering your LinkBlue credentials will give you access to free downloads reserved for UK staff members.

**Wireless Access**

To connect to UK’s wireless network, please see the information posted at [http://www.uky.edu/ukit/techtips/faculty/wireless-access](http://www.uky.edu/ukit/techtips/faculty/wireless-access).
Dual Monitor Set-Up

Some advisors (as well as other faculty and staff members around campus) utilize a set-up which incorporates two computer monitors. This allows advisors to pull up student information, online content, and other computer applications on both screens. It is even possible to shift content from one screen to the other. If you are interested in exploring the use of two monitors, contact your unit’s IT staff.

Presentations

Most all of us know about and are relatively proficient in using PowerPoint to develop presentations, and it does not appear that particular application will be going anywhere anytime soon.

However, do know there are other platforms that can be used to develop and give presentations, including Prezi. See http://prezi.com/ for more information, sample presentations, and details about how folks like us with a .edu e-mail address can set up a free account.

Microsoft Lync

Microsoft Lync is an instant messaging platform available to UK students, faculty, and staff. It allows for a broad range of functionalities, including instant messaging, screen sharing, online meeting access, and general collaboration. It is an excellent way to connect with colleagues across campus or even work together remotely. See http://wiki.uky.edu/lync/Wiki%20Pages/Home.aspx for a free download and further information.

Tech Tips

Tech Tips offers information about a variety of technological issues and topics. See http://www.uky.edu/ukit/techtips/faculty for helpful information for faculty and staff.

Managing Your Work Environment

Think about how best to set up your work environment to maximize productivity. Does it help to work to music? Sites like Pandora allow you to customize the tunes you hear as you work.

Sometimes, it pays to take a quick brain break and get some fresh air. Also, don’t forget, not every meeting and appointment has to be confined to your office. Perhaps consider finding a spot at a picnic table or grabbing coffee as you work with a student or colleague!
Social Media

Many colleges and units across campus utilize social media to connect with current and prospective students, as well as a variety of other constituents.

http://www.uky.edu/PR/SocialMedia/ is UK’s social media hub, featuring connection points to most, if not all, official social media accounts across campus. The site also contains policies and guidelines regarding the use of social media by faculty and staff.

Blogs

Aside from things like Facebook and Twitter, blogs are another way to reach students, parents, and other stakeholders.

A well-crafted and well-maintained blog can serve a variety of purposes. For instance, one can share updates and announcements and recognize students, faculty, and staff members for certain accomplishments.

Another good use of a blog is to address frequently-asked questions. If you or other advisors in your college or unit find yourself answering the same question many times over, consider crafting a blog post addressing the question. That way, the next time the question comes up, simply dropping a link to that informative post should do the trick!