

# **Controlling demands using e-mail and spreadsheets hides losses**

*São Paulo, June / 2018 - The Runrun.it Team*

*Runrun.it*

**When teams get lost in e-mails, disorganized documentation, and dispersed spreadsheets, companies start losing time and money. It is a situation that needs to be remedied.**

With rapid technological evolution, the growth of automation and digital transformation, the use of spreadsheets and e-mails **no longer is sufficient to meet companies' current requirements for controlling demands**, organizing the flow of tasks and formalizing communications. Worse than that, these tools have started to become a drag on the efficient use of time and resources.

Companies in all areas, from creative teams in advertising and marketing agencies, to financial and consulting firms and IT teams, have projects that are more complex than when spreadsheets and e-mails were originally developed and used to monitor their progress. These days, organizations need dynamic solutions that are easy to adapt to their routines, in structuring workflows, measuring performance metrics, and providing the necessary data to support decision-making. It is the best way to avoid the losses that many companies are experiencing when they attempt to manage their operations using methods that were developed for a simpler age.

In order to have an idea of the amount of money lost, according to a survey, published in the Harvard Business Review and conducted by Affinity Live, that interviewed 500 professionals in the United States, **each person generated \$50,000 in revenue losses per year for not having insufficient control of their e-mails**, including those of their clients.

The study also reported that 40% of respondents said that they never keep track of the time they spend reading and responding to e-mails, and only 33% stated that they do it always, or even, often. It gets worse: more than half of respondents revealed that their managers used time sheets to price projects for customers.

As a result of not accounting for the time spent on emails in these time sheets, the US economy is losing 50 million billable hours, or \$7.4 billion a day. Just imagine the productivity gains if records were accurately kept and the consequent increase in revenues from customers.

## Time and productivity

Managing project demands by using e-mails and spreadsheets results in significant time delays and losses. A [survey](#) by Ventana Research shows how spreadsheets, for example, consume our most valuable resource. Companies which routinely use the tool **have employees who spend an average of 18 hours per month updating, consolidating and revising data**. According to the study, 26% of employees suffer regular delays due to their work on spreadsheets.

Another worrying case was revealed in this [article](#) in Business Insider. The report shows that 16% of large UK companies acknowledged finding inaccurate information on their spreadsheets and a third of them reported errors in decision making due to such mistakes.

There have been proven losses due to the use of e-mails as well. According to a [study](#) by McKinsey, **people spend an average of about 28% of their workweeks reading and responding to messages**, more than two hours in an eight-hour workday. Moreover, after reading a new email, it takes employees an average of 64 seconds to resume what they were doing before. This led many companies to adopt restrictions on the use of e-mail.

**The French IT giant Atos, for example, banned the use of e-mail** for more than 76,000 of its employees in 52 countries in 2014, **replacing it with an online collaboration tool**. The British multinational Virgin banned about 200 employees from accessing their inboxes on Wednesday mornings. With the measure, employees can take advantage of the extra time to go to the company's gym with the rest of their team, attend brainstorming sessions, or just talk in person with their colleagues and managers.

In fact, according to McKinsey's study, **it's possible to recuperate from 25% to 30% of the time lost with e-mails by exchanging it for a social platform, such as management software**. This will lead to an increase in the employees', and therefore the company's, productivity.

## Misplaced Files

Besides the negative impact on productivity and the loss of time invested by staff, **e-mail inboxes and spreadsheets hide other problems, especially with regards to project and task management**. Common examples are failures in communication, **with information and files being lost in e-mails**, Hangouts and WhatsApp groups. That's not counting the additional spreadsheets dispersed throughout different places in the cloud and computer folders, with no central information repository. This in-built chaos in the company's structure undermines efficiency and can affect project deliveries, often causing missed deadlines.

With technology in your favor, you can adopt an online management platform that will help you strategically and intelligently execute tasks. According to this [post](#) by McKinsey, managers who are planning on implementing software solutions in the workplace consider that **the most important factors in their decision include organizing workflows and facilitating internal communications**.

The control of demands and tasks can be greatly facilitated with the use of a management system that offers centralized storage of files, real-time monitoring and defined deadlines for deliveries. Just as content is shared amongst the team in a secure and online environment, documents are recorded and structured simply and practically. In this way, the data will be accessible at any time and available whenever it is necessary to find tasks, projects and task-owners.

## **A lack of prioritization**

Another common complaint when managing through the use of e-mails and spreadsheets stems from a lack of prioritization. With such a large amount of demands and tasks being forwarded via e-mail, employees fail to understand which tasks are the most urgent and which are simply important for the company to succeed. So, to let employees know exactly what it is that they should be doing, it is beneficial to consider the application of [stack methodology](#) to the company's management.

Through this method, tasks are organized in order of importance according to the needs of the company and become indicative of what the individual employees should concentrate on first. **Establishing a list of activities allows you to improve team and employee planning**, both on a daily and weekly basis, as well as controlling the flow of demands and having delivery dates forecast accurately. And do you know what's best about this whole process? Managers can do everything without resorting to sending e-mails.

However, when planning, it is important to know how to separate the things that are urgent from that which is merely important, helping you avoid a vicious cycle of spending time stamping out fires, or unexpected and time-sensitive emergencies. With effective time and task management, you can rebalance priorities, shift the responsibility for particular tasks and focus your team's efforts on the activities that bring the best results for your organization.

## **Clear communications**

If spreadsheets and e-mails hinder the management of demands and internal communications, leading to a loss of data, obviously, **the best solution is to adopt methods that make your communications more efficient**. Thus, clear objectives and deadlines can be established, in addition to defining performance metrics and providing more assertive guidance and feedback to employees.

To take control of tasks, demands, and workflows, **the implementation of visual management is a fundamental strategy to develop and maintain a transparent structure**. The company's performance indicators, goals and results then become available to all employees. Through panels with graphics and data, the information is disseminated in places of easy visibility, making it accessible to all. This leads teams to push themselves to increase productivity and improve performance.

One of [visual management's](#) methods to control task controls and workflows is [kanban](#), which is used to optimize processes with a framework that shows the progress of each activity and its owner through the use of post-its on a whiteboard. With the system, you can follow the progress and execution of projects in a visual, practical manner, while using few resources.

## Collaboration and team integration

Using e-mails and spreadsheets for task control is also one of the principal adversaries of the effective integration of company staff. Each employee ends up working on their own, without adequately sharing information and the development of the services. In such cases, their managers also routinely fail to keep track of who is working on what, whether there are conflicting priorities within the team, whether the team is aligned and how the projects are progressing. **This makes internal processes inefficient and costly, as any projects may not go according to expectations and subsequently require extensive revisions.**

Furthermore, it is worth noting that, **people lose almost 20 percent of their time looking for internal data** or seeking help from colleagues with specific activities due to a lack of seamless collaboration and file sharing, according to research by McKinsey. However, these losses can be avoided through the use of an intelligent and collaborative management tool.

## Workflows

Companies cannot be successful without properly controlling existing demands through **structured workflows that grant management gains in agility and performance.** It is therefore critical to record and document the various stages of any given project. Most importantly, this needs to be done automatically, avoiding additional operational and bureaucratic bottlenecks.

A [study](#) by the Aberdeen Group study shows that 86% of successful organizations in the United States use management automation platforms, and the improvement in decision-making can reach 20%, thanks to the use of appropriate software solutions. The article also lists the common characteristics of companies that have high-performing teams which adopted automated workflows:


- 1 Streamline processes** with technology and merge data from disparate systems;
- 2 Integrate employees and clients**, with debureaucratized information and content sharing;
- 3 Have access to an overview of their processes**, with rapid access to reports and the status of projects;
- 4 Avoid getting lost in paperwork** and digitize content for simple storage and referencing.

## Automatic Timesheets

To control demands, you need to manage the hours worked by the employees involved in each project or activity. Often, this assessment is carried out manually, using spreadsheets. However, the data entry for such manual control is often fraught with potential errors in execution, in addition to the fact that the completion and management of these spreadsheets is an added, unneeded layer of responsibility and operational necessity for the associated employees. That responsibility is added to the need to complete their other activities and often gets laid by the wayside, forgotten in their rush to meet other, more important-seeming deadlines.

Manually completing timesheets is not a part of the time invested in client-related projects, worsening the ratio of hours worked in internal company matters and the hours contracted by the client. Therefore, **poorly recorded manual timesheets lead to losses of time and money for the company.**

There is a simple solution for facilitating this control and getting rid of manual spreadsheets: **implement the use of automatic timesheets, which measure the amount of time invested by task, project and client, and generate performance reports based on that data.** With the system, it is as simple as clicking “play” to record the exact number of hours invested in each demand.

Properly managing time using automatic timesheets brings clear benefits to the coordination of your team’s labor. **It’s possible to improve productivity and optimize your employees’ work schedules, in addition to following the end-result more closely.** Accurate system results also help with cost-per-hour time management, the assessment of project and customer profitability, and the proper pricing of services. 

## About Runrun.it

To manage your company's demands, we have seen, there is no better choice than to replace your old, manual spreadsheets and e-mails with intelligent work management software. Using an automation tool such as [Runrun.it](https://runrun.it), you can concentrate all of your team's communications in one place, together with easily accessible file storage and formalized conversations.

The system allows for the streamlining of processes, organizing company workflows and defining project structures, making the progress and execution of each stage of an individual, or group of projects more transparent. With [Runrun.it](https://runrun.it), managers retain control of tasks, wedded to the ability to distribute demands while prioritizing and monitoring them.

All of these capabilities are important for measuring your employees' productivity and controlling how efficiently projects are executed. All of this control stems from having access to this data, including performance indicators and time management reports that track employee allocation, in addition to the associated costs per hours worked, per project and client. With the use of a comprehensive [Dashboard](#) that displays custom metrics, you can track all of your business's needed KPIs on a single page.

[Runrun.it](https://runrun.it) will leverage your company's capacity to act rapidly in the market, multiplying the benefits to management, regardless of your business segment. IT teams, advertising and marketing agencies, financial services companies and consultancies, the companies in these sectors all stand to gain from our software.



Learn more about all of these features by signing up now for a free trial at <https://runrun.it>

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