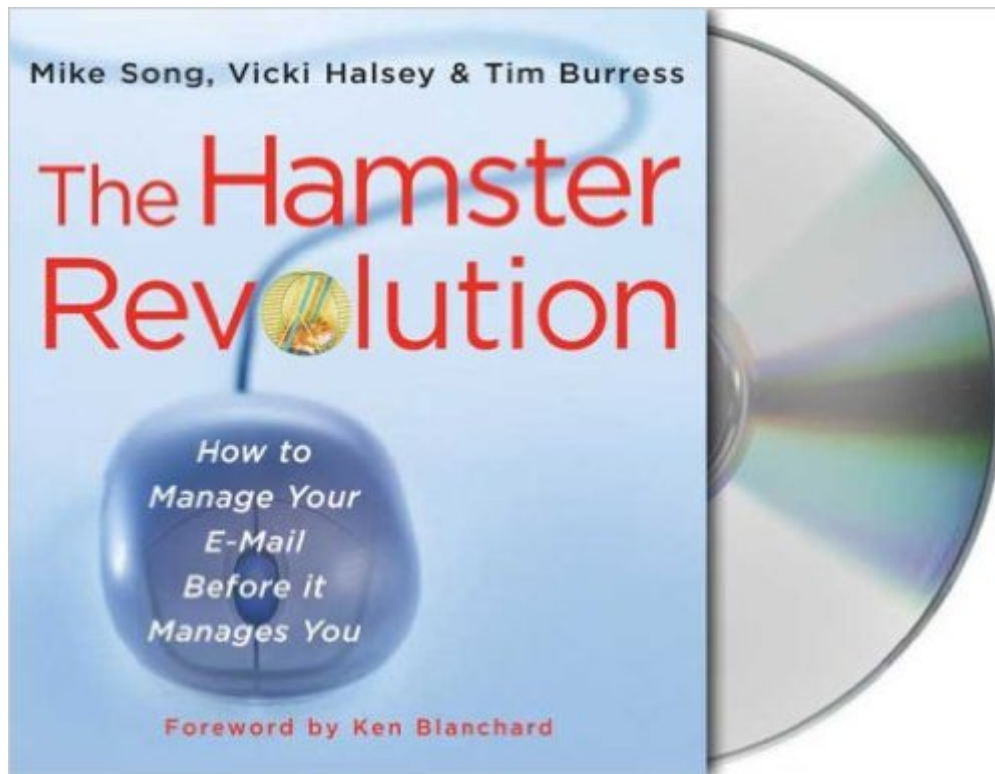


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# The Hamster Revolution: How To Manage Your Email Before It Manages You



## Synopsis

Written in parable form, *The Hamster Revolution* tells the story of Harold, an HR Director who has fallen victim to the dreaded clutches of info-glut. Paralyzed by a deluge of electronic data and e-mail, his days fill with repetitive and fruitless action. In a Kafkaesque twist, he actually turns into a hamster running on a wheel, though he's too busy to even notice. Happily, Harold meets the info-coach who recognizes his ailment and teaches him a few effective lessons about managing e-mail--key to which is developing higher quality while getting rid of all that's unnecessary. The info-coach introduces Harold to the COTA system--Clients, Output, Teams, Administrative--which shows him an innovative way of storing e-mail and electronic media into these four main categories. Based on feedback and input from 2,000 Capital One employees who attended the authors' seminar, *The Hamster Revolution* offers an appealing approach to an increasingly common and difficult problem.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The aim of this book is to reduce email volume, improve email quality, encourage sending email that is more actionable and organize folders using COTA (Clients, Output, Teams, Admin) approach. Although, some ideas of the book are arguable, the book makes you think once again about your way of emailing. Some readers may find COTA useful, but for me it is too complicated and counterproductive. You can do more in less time with a simpler scheme. I prefer the method advocated by David Allen in his book "Getting Things Done: The Art of Stress-Free Productivity":

where the messages are divided by four categories: "next actions", "projects", "waiting for" and "someday/maybe". I also disagree with the authors' advice to use instant messaging (IM) in addition to email. The authors did not get the major point of e-mail: you write your emails in the most convenient time for you, and the recipient reads them in the most convenient time for her. What the authors do not understand is that you cannot disturb somebody by sending an email in an inappropriate time. For example, the authors wrote that an email may be "...unnecessary interruption in a workday already filled with interruptions. .... You are working on an important project that requires a lot of concentration.... your masterpiece... and ding, an email comes in". The authors do not understand that is not the arrival that made you interrupt, but the counterproductive configuration of the email software that notifies you about the incoming messages. If you will disable the notifications, an incoming email will never break off your concentration again. You will read all the incoming messages in a proper time. The authors also forget about spam - a potential source for interruptions.

Taking cue from *The One Minute Manager*, *Zapp!*, *Fish!* and *Who Moved My Cheese?*, *The Hamster Revolution* uses a parable to show how to better manage and organize e-mail and information. The hamster represents people endlessly running on the wheel of e-mail. Right away, I start using concepts from the 90-minute book. Considering I'm an organized person, that says something. In the story, Harold the Hamster receives a visit from an information coach to help him with e-mail and information management. Harold is a person who turned into a hamster because e-mail and information trapped him on a figurative hamster wheel. Harold and his coach think aloud as they explore his e-mail habits and inbox to find the problem areas. The banter between the two gives the reader insight into why something doesn't work and how to fix it. Their comments mirror what many of us think when we're drowning in messages. Though cheesy at times, the story quickly explains the how, what, and why without confusing readers with dry writing. I was eager to discover the secret of COTA, the concept for creating folders named Clients, Output, Teams and Administration. COTA also represents the order of priority. The Clients folder receives top honors on the hierarchy than Output. Administration gets thrown to the bottom of the pile where it belongs. But this concept isn't as foolproof as the authors make it sound. They state that you won't run into a situation when an email or document belongs in two folders. However, if that should happen -- then the document belongs in the one higher up on the COTA ladder. Furthermore, the system serves departments and teams best.

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