2003 E-Mail Rules, Policies and Practices Survey

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Sponsored by:

**American Management Association,
The ePolicy Institute, and
Clearswift**

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2003 E-Mail Rules, Policies and Practices Survey

Background

American Management Association conducted its first survey of e-policies and practices in the workplace in 2001. The 2003 E-Mail Rules, Policies and Practices Survey (conducted by the AMA, The ePolicy Institute, and Clearswift) is a follow-up to the 2001 questionnaire in which 435 respondents participated. In 2003, more than 1,100 participated in the research survey via the Internet and fax. While many questions in the 2001 survey were repeated in 2003, there also were new questions added, reflecting the evolving role of and challenges associated with workplace e-mail.

Executive Summary

In 2003, more than half (52%) of U.S. companies engage in some form of e-mail monitoring of employees and enforce e-mail policies with discipline or other methods.

Type of Monitoring

Enforcement Methods
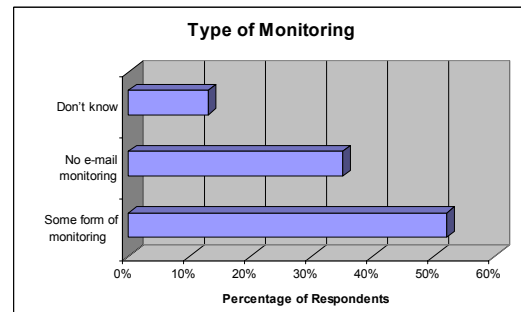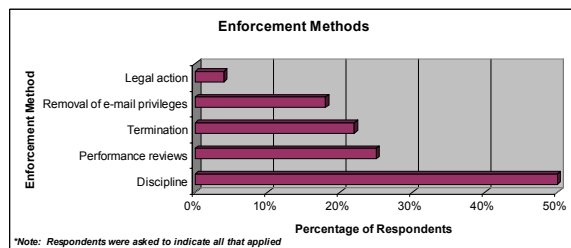
In fact, 22% of companies have terminated an employee for e-mail infractions.

Three-fourths (75%) of all those surveyed say their organization has written policies concerning e-mail, but fewer than half train their employees on them.

Policies & Policy Training
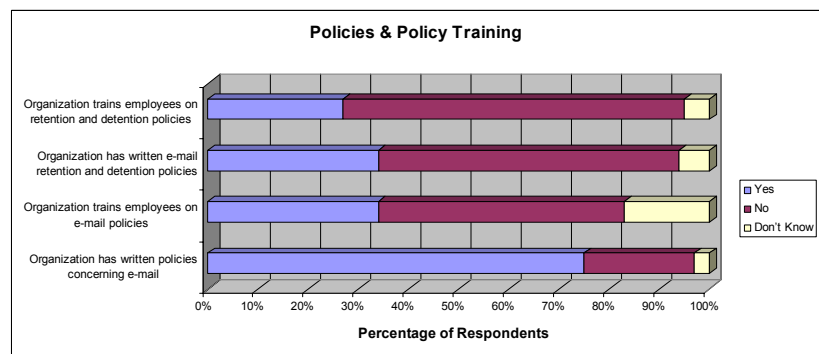
In spite of recent crackdowns on regulated industries (including multi-million-dollar fines levied by the SEC against brokerage firms) only one third of respondents report having written e-mail

retention and deletion policies in place. That's the same figure reported in 2001 before regulated industries came under public fire for failing to retain e-mail business records.

Increased regulatory and legal scrutiny of e-mail is reflected in the fact that 14% of companies have been ordered by a court or regulatory body to produce employee e-mail, a 5% increase over 2001. What's more, 1 in 20 companies has battled a workplace lawsuit triggered by e-mail.

The average respondent spends a quarter of the workday on e-mail, with 31% of respondents devoting more than two hours a day to e-mail. 90% admitted that some e-mail, usually less than 10%, is personal. And 92% said they receive spam mail at work. Almost one quarter (24%) report losing more than two days in the last year due to e-mail system problems.

51% believe e-mail has made them much more efficient. The ability to get and transmit information quickly and to reach customers and colleagues around the world are the two principle advantages of e-mail.

Monitoring

52% say their organizations engage in some form of e-mail monitoring, versus 47% in 2001. The number could be higher since 13% of respondents "don't know" if they are monitored. 51% say that incoming e-mail is monitored and 19% say internal e-mail between employees is checked.

Q. *What type of e-mail monitoring does your organization engage in?*
   (Check all that apply)

Type of Monitoring	Total
(# of respondents)	(1085)
Some form of monitoring	**52%**
Software to monitor incoming e-mail	51%
Software to monitor outgoing e-mail	39%
Software to monitor internal e-mail between employees	19%
No e-mail monitoring	**35%**
Don't know	13%

*Note: Respondents were asked to indicate all that applied*
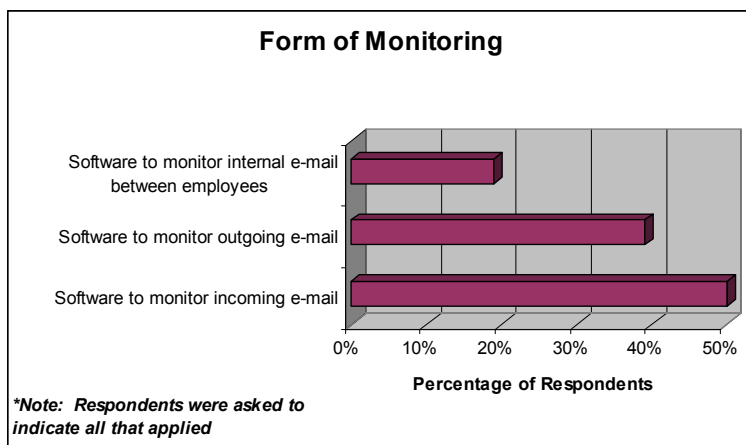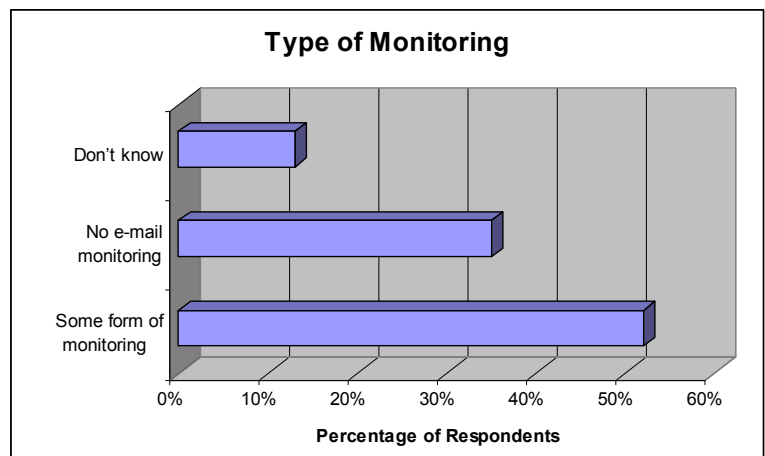
Policies

75% of respondents report that their organizations have written policies concerning e-mail and 48% say that they are trained on those e-policies. **There has been a decline in the use of written policy since 2001, when 81% of respondents reported having an e-mail policy in place. On the up side, workplace training on e-policies has doubled since 2001, when only 24% of companies reported offering e-policy education to employees.**

When it comes to specific policies governing the retention and deletion of e-mail, the response is significantly lower. As in 2001, only one-third say that their organizations have written retention and deletion policies for e-mail and just over one-fourth train employees in these retention and deletion policies.

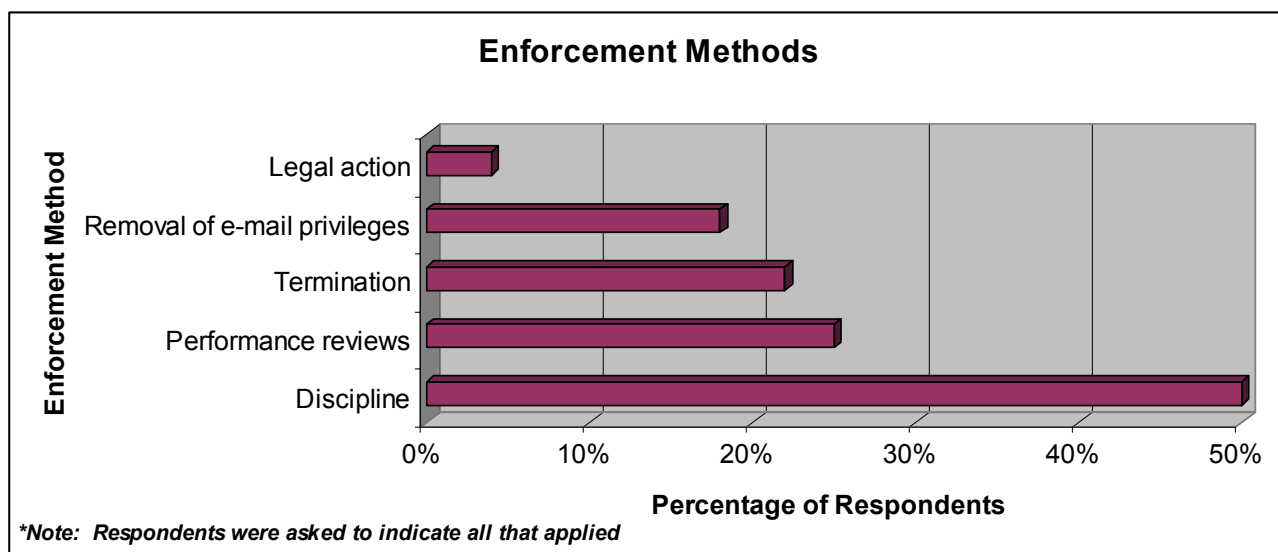| Policies and Policy Training	Yes	No	Don't Know
Organization has written policies concerning e-mail	75%	22%	3%
Organization trains employees on e-mail policies	48%	49%	3%
Organization has written e-mail retention and deletion policies	34%	60%	6%
Organization trains employees on retention and deletion policies	27%	68%	5%
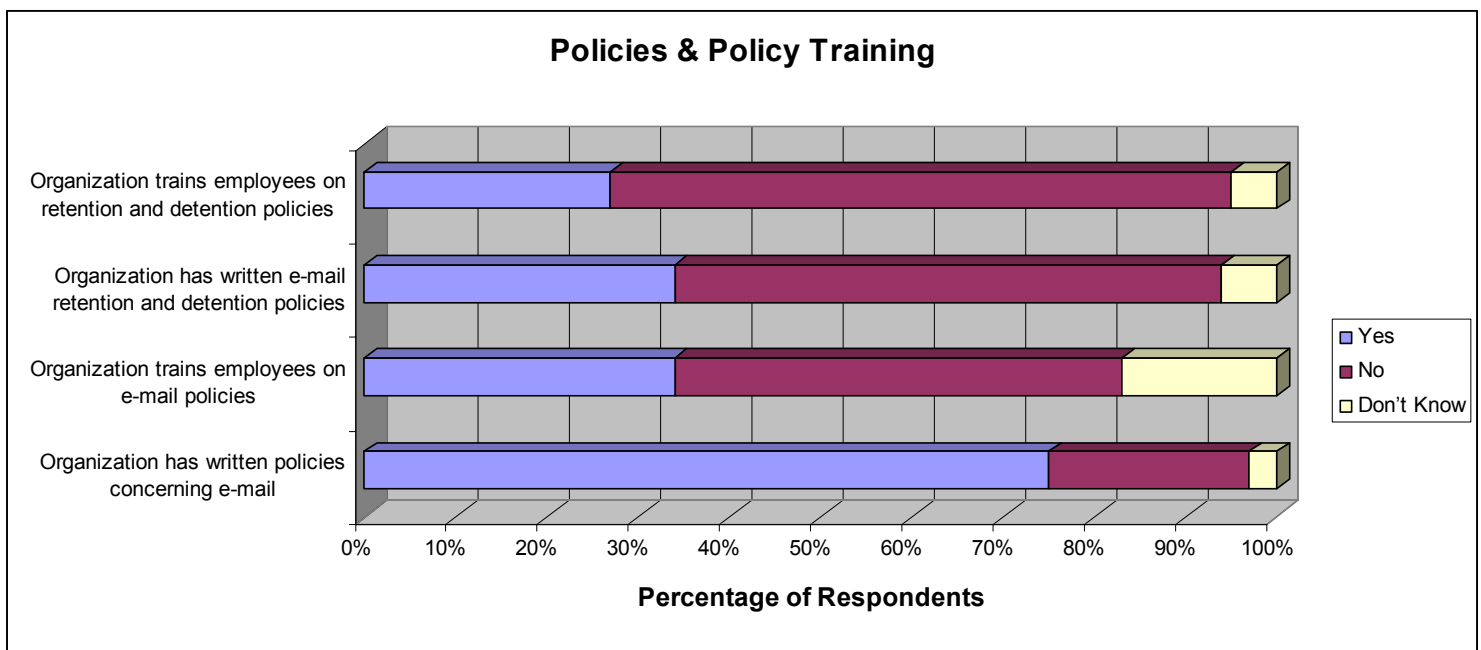
59% say their organization uses some method of enforcement while an additional 12% "don't know" if there is any enforcement. Half of the firms use "discipline" to enforce e-mail policies, about 25% use performance reviews, and 22% have terminated employees.

Q. Which of the following has your organization used to enforce its e-mail rules and policies? (Check all that apply).

Enforcement Methods	Total
(# of respondents)	(1125)
Use some method of enforcement	**59%**
Discipline	50%
Performance Reviews	25%
Termination	22%
Removal of e-mail privileges	18%
Legal Action	4%
No Action	**29%**
Don't know	12%

Enforcement Used

Percentage of Respondents

Enforcement Methods

Legal action — bar extends to ~4%

Removal of e-mail privileges — bar extends to ~18%

Termination — bar extends to ~22%

Performance reviews — bar extends to ~25%

Discipline — bar extends to ~50%

Enforcement Method (y-axis)

Percentage of Respondents (x-axis: 0%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%)

*Note: Respondents were asked to indicate all that applied*

Nearly half of all organizations use education to control employees' written e-mail content, consistent with the number that provide e-mail policy training. Just over 40% use software to control written e-mail content and 23% use a combination of both education and software. **The use of technology has increased since2001, when 24% of respondents reported using software to conduct key word or key phrase searches** of e-mail and/or computer files.

Q. ***What tools does your organization use to control employees' written e-mail content? (Check all that apply).***

Control Methods (# of respondents)	Total (1122)
Education	48%
Software	40%
Both education and software	23%
No action	31%
Don't know	5%

Control Methods

*Note: Respondents were asked to indicate all that applied*
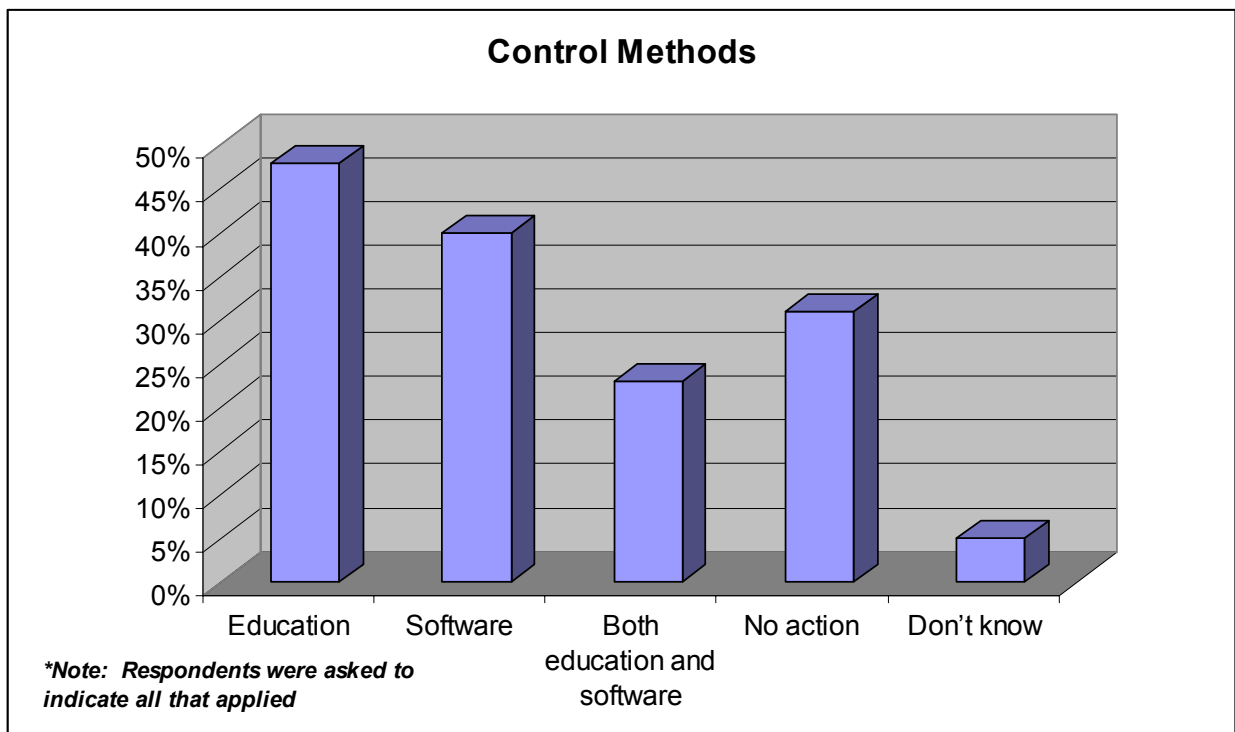
E-mail Problems

Virtually all respondents report that e-mail has caused some sort of work interruption.

*Q. **Have e-mail problems triggered any of the following disasters for your organization? (Check all that apply)***

Disasters	Total
(# of respondents)	(936)
Computer system disabled for a time due to e-mail	38%
Business interrupted due to e-mail	34%
Computer virus entered through e-mail	33%
Workplace lawsuit	5%
Other	2%
None	*

Note: Respondents were asked to indicate all that applied
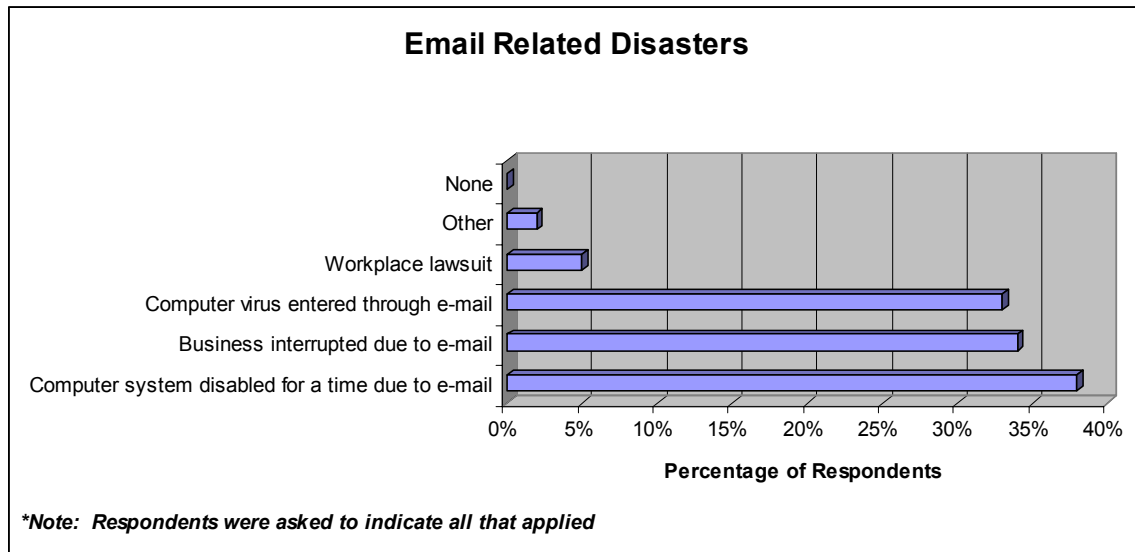
76% of respondents say that they have lost time in the last year due to e-mail system problems. 35% estimate they lost only half a day, but 24% think they have lost more than two days.

Q. ***How much time do you think you have lost due to e-mail system downtime or problems in the last year?***

Time Lost	Total
(# of respondents)	(1123)
Have lost time due to e-mail problems	**76%**
Up to half a day	35%
One day	17%
2-4 days	19%
5-9 days	3%
10 days or more	2%
No time lost	24%
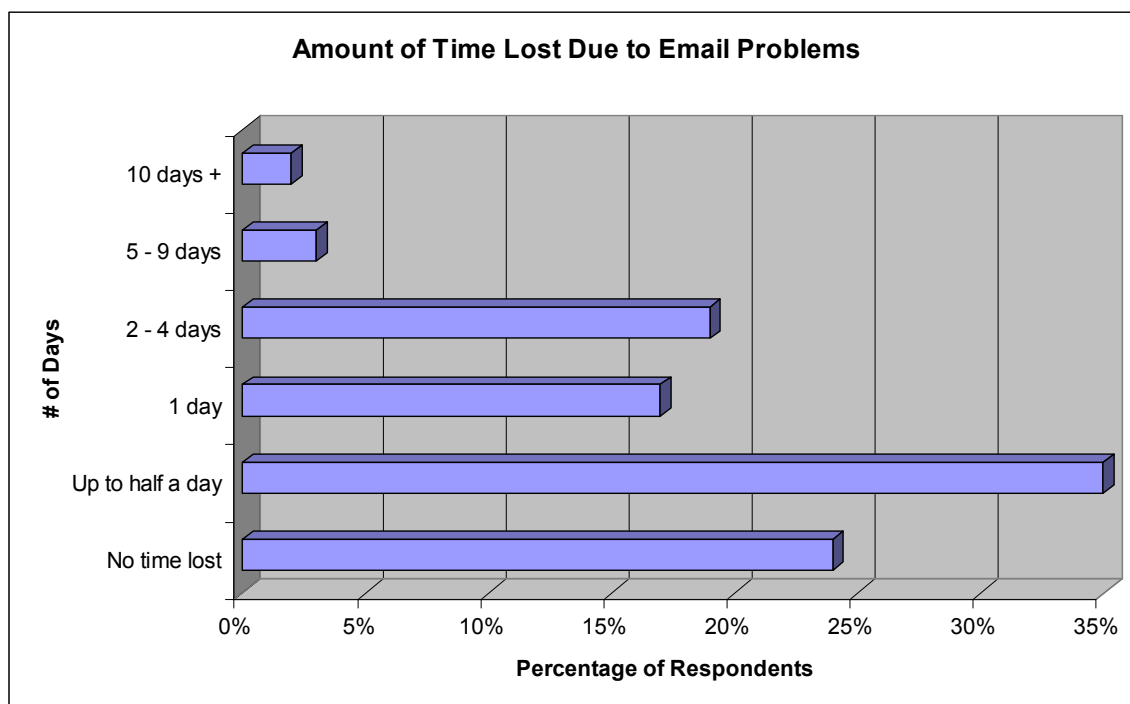
14% of respondents say that their organization has been ordered by a court or regulatory body to produce employee e-mail. This is an increase over 2001, when 9% of respondents reported employee e-mail had been subpoenaed.

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Q. *Has your organization ever been ordered by a court or regulatory body to produce employee e-mail?*

| **Ever Ordered**	**Total**
(# of respondents)	(1127)
Yes	14%
No	66%
Don't know	20%

Ever Ordered By a Court or Regulatory Body
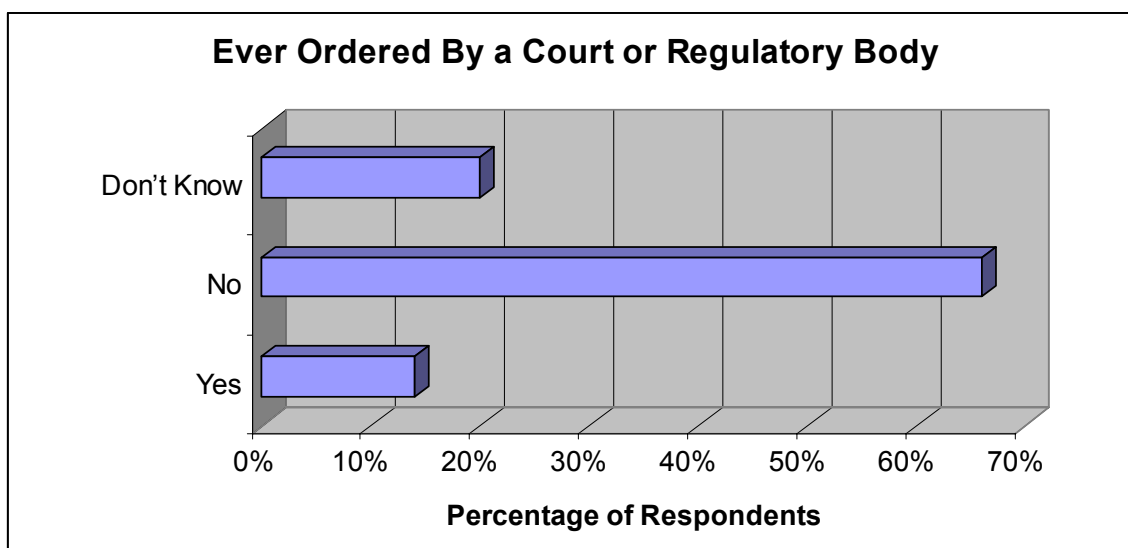
Time Spent on E-Mail

The average respondent spends about 107 minutes (1 hour 47 minutes) on e-mail every day … about 25% of the work day. While 24% report spending less than one hour, 31% spend more than two hours and 8% more than four hours.

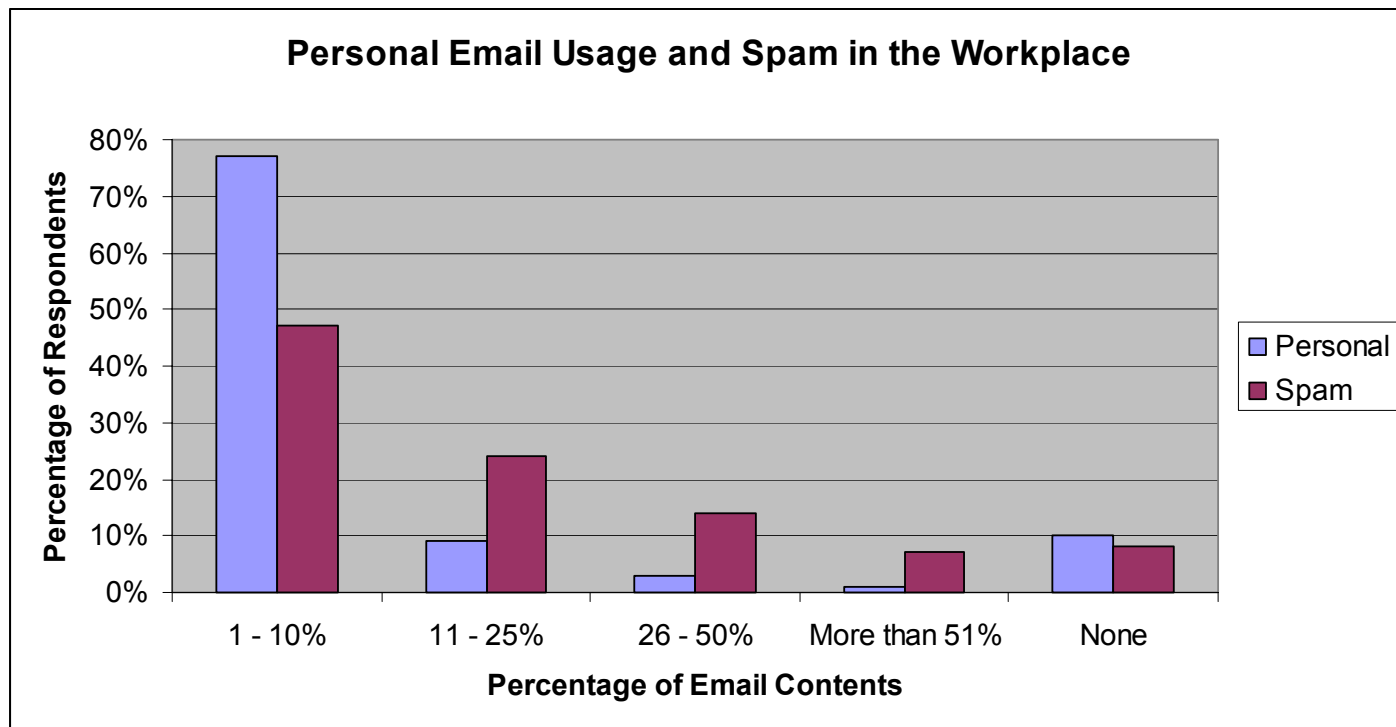*Q. On a typical workday, how much time do you spend on e-mail?*

Time Each Day (# of Respondents)	Total (1130)
Less than 1 hour	**24%**
0 – 59 minutes	24%
1–2 hours	**45%**
60-89 minutes	20%
90-120 minutes	25%
More than 2 hours	**31%**
2-3 hours	15%
3-4 hours	8%
More than 4 hours	**8%**

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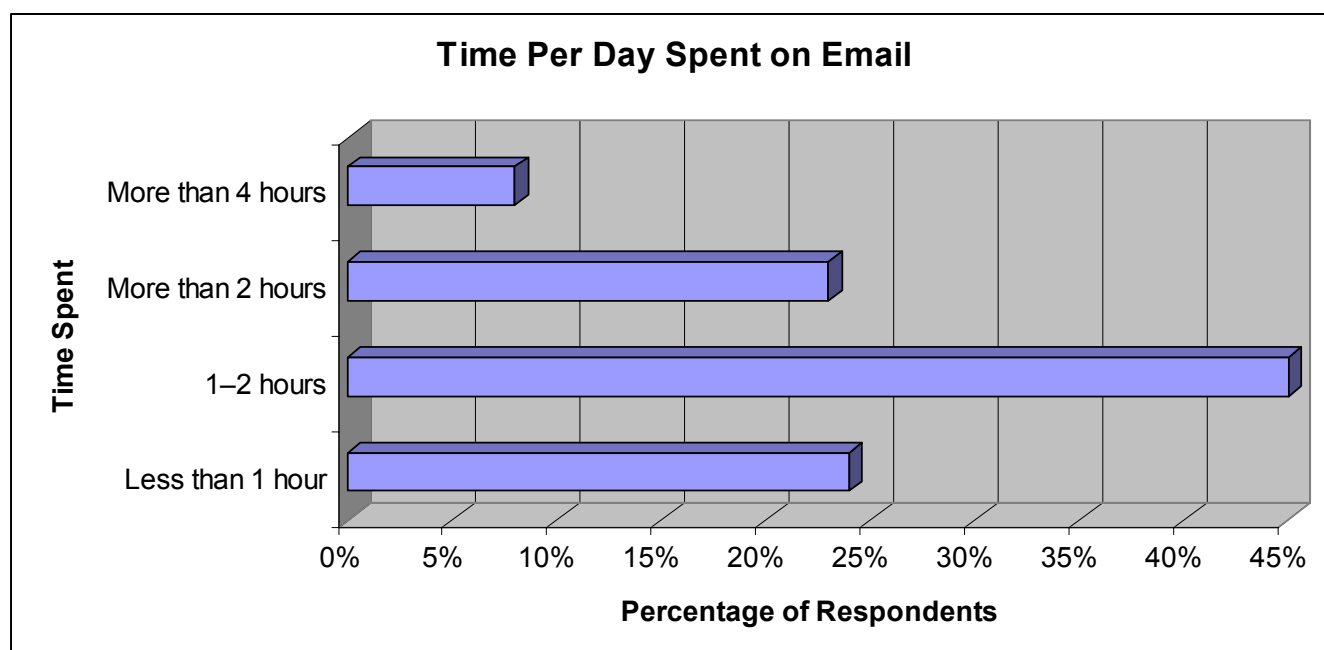
While 90% of respondents report that they send and/or receive personal e-mail at work, the vast majority say it is under 10% of all their e-correspondence.   4% say more than 25% of their e-mail is personal.

92% of respondents receive spam mail at work.   45% say it constitutes more than 10% of all their e-mail and 7% think it represents more than 50% of all the messages they receive.

| % of e-Mail	Personal	Spam
(# of respondents)	(1130)	(1128)
Any	**90%**	**92%**
1-10%	77%	47%
11-25%	9%	24%
26-50%	3%	14%
More than 51%	1%	7%
None	10%	8%

Affect of E-Mail on Efficiency

86% of respondents think that e-mail has made them more efficient with 51% saying they are much more efficient. 10% think e-mail has made them less efficient and 4% perceive no change.

Q. How has e-mail affected your efficiency at work?

Affect of e-Mail	Total
(# of respondents)	(1128)
More Efficient	**86%**
Much more	51%
Somewhat more	20%
A little more	15%
No change	4%
Less Efficient	**10%**
A little less	3%
Somewhat less	5%
Much less	2%

Affect of Email on Efficiency

Level of Efficiency
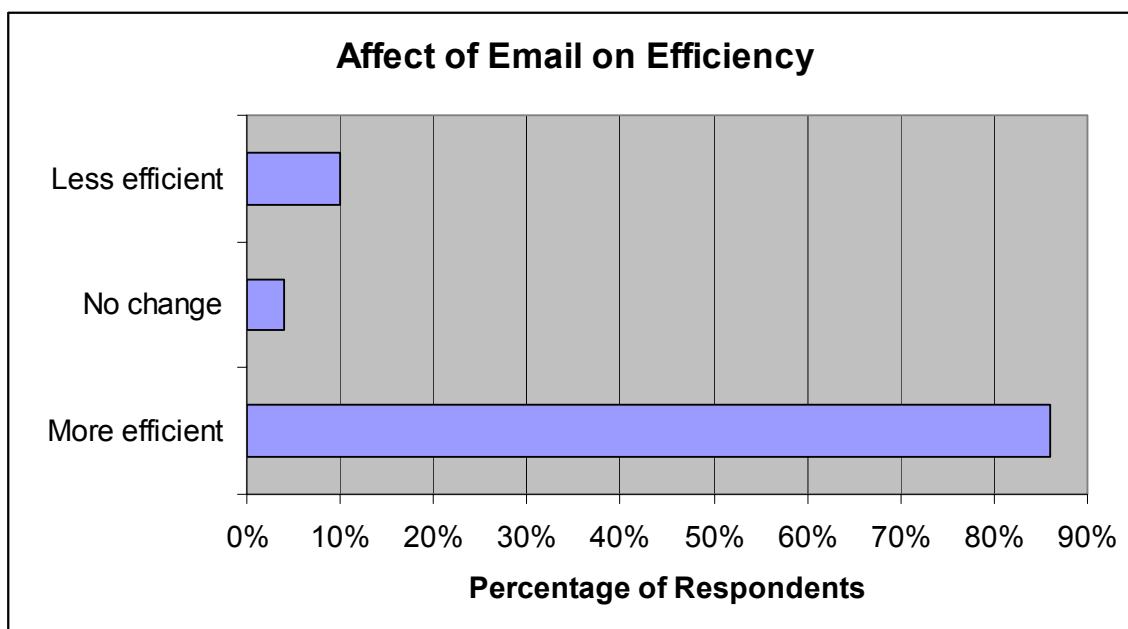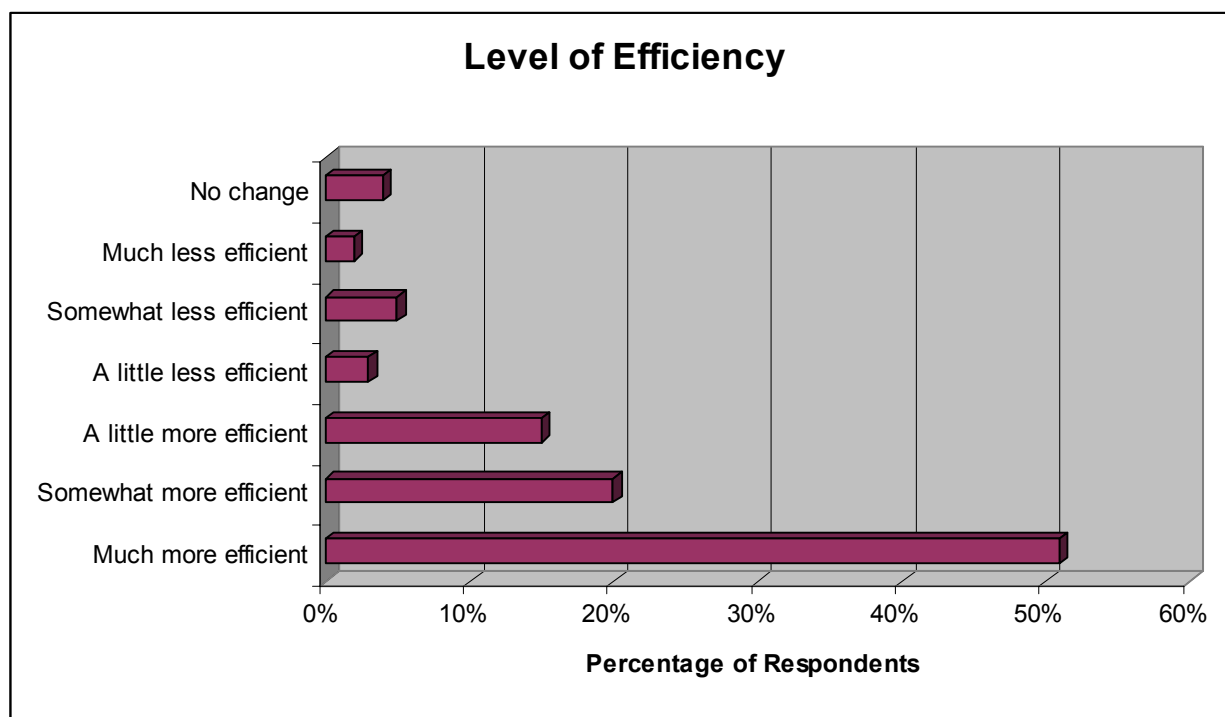
The aspect of e-mail that helps make nearly all respondents more efficient is the ability to "get and transmit information quickly" (87%). More than three-fourths cite reaching customers all around the world as a prime benefit and two-thirds like the fact that with e-mail they can "think about" their response.

19% do feel they "spend too much time reading and answering e-mail." "Filing" and "dealing with spam" are also considered negative aspects of e-mail.

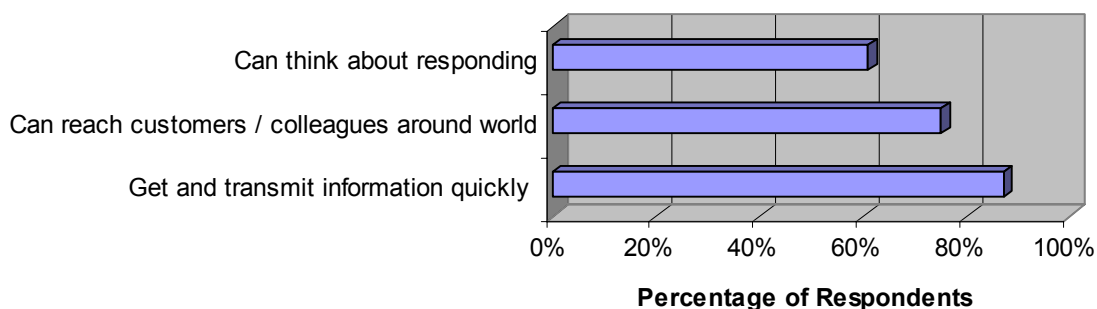### Q. What's good and bad about e-mail? (Check all that apply)

Affect of e-mail	Total
(# of respondents)	(1115)

Positive Affect

Get and transmit information quickly	**87%**
Can reach customers and colleagues all around the world	75%
Can think about responding	61%

Positive Affects of Email

Note: Respondents were asked to indicate all that applied

Negative Affect

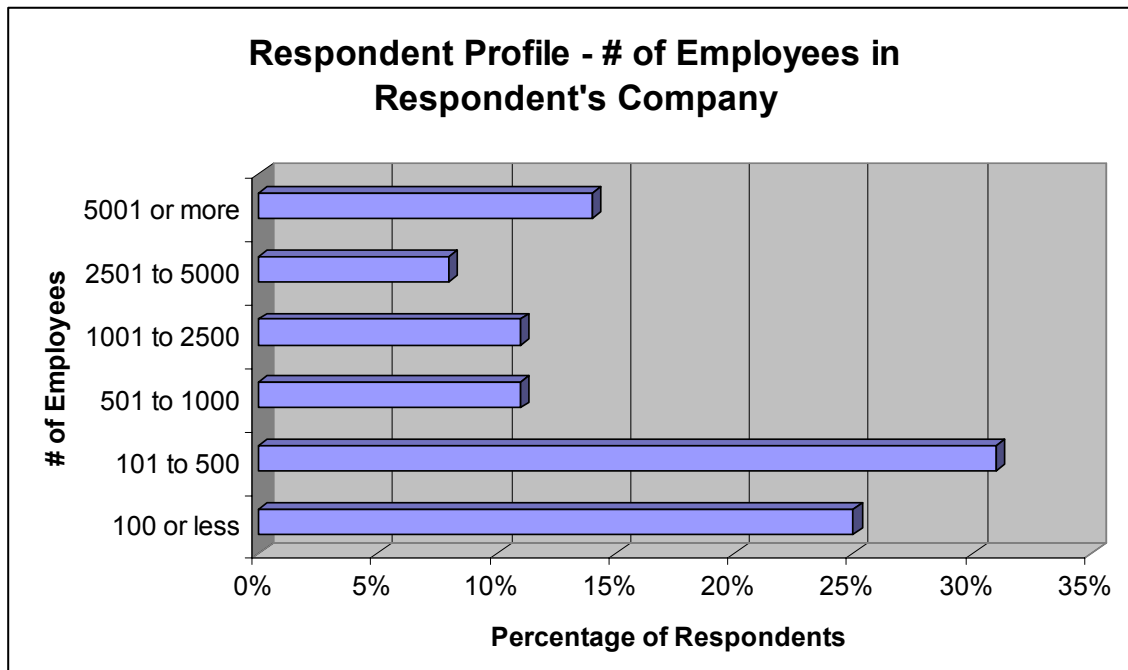|	
Spend too much time reading and answering e-mails	**19%**
Spend too much time managing, filing and printing e-mail	13%
Waste too much time on spam mail	12%

Note: Respondents were asked to indicate all that applied

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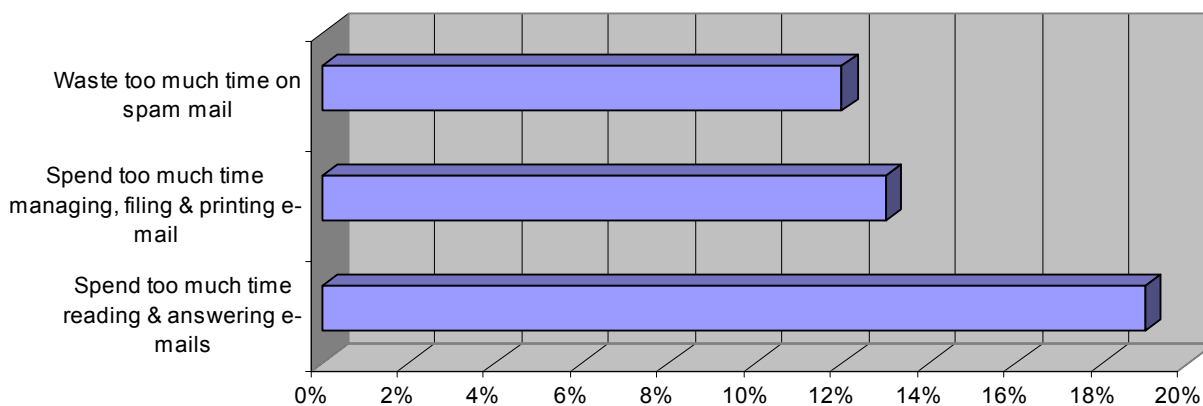
Respondent Profile

# of Employees in Company	Total
(# of respondents)	(1124)
100 or less	25%
101 to 500	31%
501 to 1000	11%
1001 to 2500	11%
2501 to 5000	8%
5001 or more	14%

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Industry that best describes your organization	**Total**
(# of respondents)	(1127)
Manufacturing	25%
Business/Professional Services	19%
Financial Services	11%
General Services – nonprofit	8%
Public Administration	7%
General Services – for profit	5%
Wholesale/Retail	4%
Education	3%
Health Care	2%
Other	16%

Industry That Best Describes Your Organization
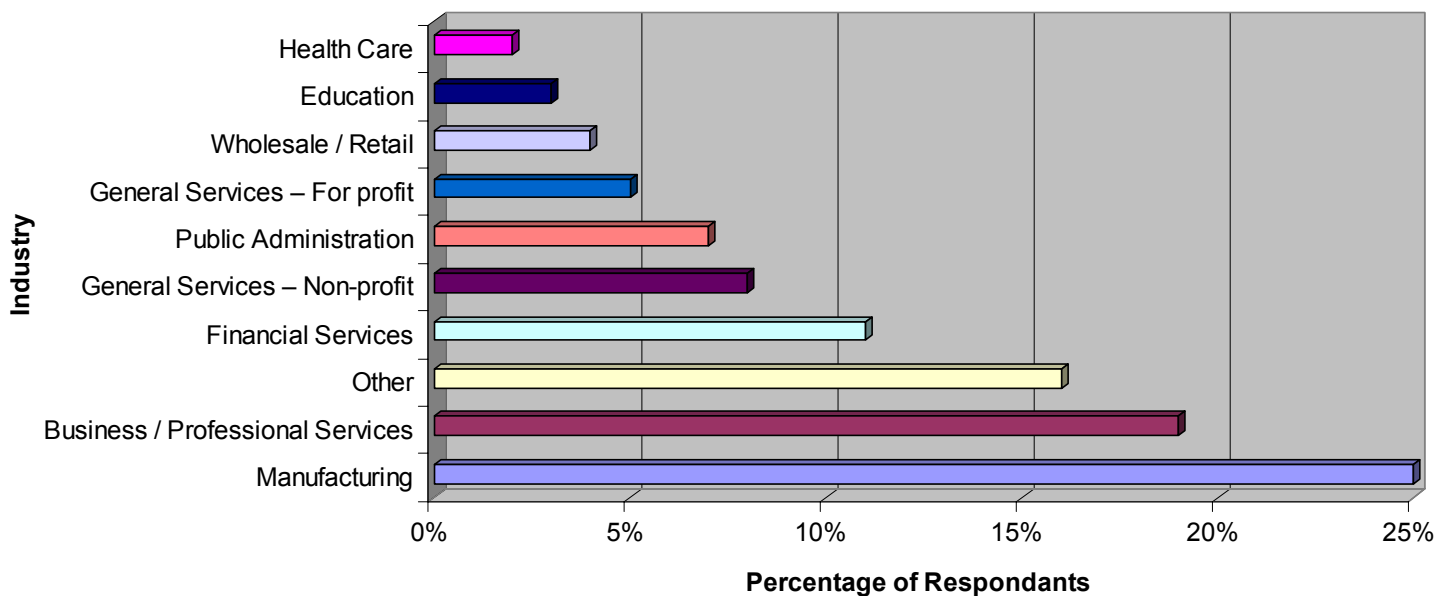
The survey questionnaire was created and extended by American Management Association with contributions from Nancy Flynn of The ePolicy Institute, co-author of *E-Mail Rules* (Amacom, May 2003), and Clearswift.