

Praise for The Hamster Revolution

“A must-read for every employee I supervise. You’ll love it!”

—Richard L. Andersen, CFE, Executive Vice President, San Diego Padres

“Great stuff! This book delivers simple and practical email management protocols.”

—Paul Roithmayr, Director, Organization Development & Training, 20th Century Fox Film Corporation

“A clever way to add 15 days to your year.”

—Joe DiDonato, Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Learning Officer, Countrywide Mortgages

“A powerful new strategy for email efficiency and etiquette.”

—Lamonte Thomas, Vice President of Sales and Customer Relations, Cigna

“These email practices will change the way you work.”

—Matt Koch, Director, Productivity & Knowledge Management, Capital One

“A home run! Find time for what matters most. For example, taking your family to the ballpark!”

—Rick Mears, Vice President, Guest Services, San Francisco Giants

“Cut through email clutter and take control of your life!”

—Lisa Lelas, author of *Simple Steps: 10 Weeks to Getting Control of Your Life*

“A refreshing and humorous approach to reducing email overload. We use the insights every day.”

—Steve Stone, CEO, Infloows

“Simple and profound! I’m having my whole team read it.”

—Mike Gugerty, Scientist, Southern California Edison

“Put an end to needless emails and missing files.”

—Sam Biegelsen, Business Development Executive, Jeppesen, a Boeing Company

“Easy to implement and powerful in results.”

—Robert, Assistant Professor of Management, University of Virginia and author of *The Hidden Power of Social Networks*

“Quick, easy, and fun to read—an effective antidote to the bulging, time-draining e-mailbox.”

—Carol Metzker, coauthor of *Appreciative Intelligence*

“Using the techniques outlined in this book, we achieved significant productivity improvements, including a reduction of time spent on email averaging eight days per year per colleague.”

—Nic Oatridge, Global Head of IT, Fortune 200 Pharmaceutical Company

“How is it possible that no one has written this book until now? This amazing guide will help you get off the email wheel!”

—Ruben Rodriguez, Senior Business Partner, Healthcare Industry

“Chock full of ideas to address one of the biggest issues facing knowledge workers today—information overload.”

—Cindy Domanowski, Vice President, Sales Training and Leadership Development, Major Accounts, ADP, Inc.

“This step-by-step guide will free you from ‘e-grip’ forever.”

—Garry Ridge, President and CEO, WD-40 Company

“Original and witty. There may be other books on email but this is the stand out.”

—Irene Sitbon, Executive Search Consultant, Bridge Partners, LLC

“AMAZING! Email used efficiently is an incredible tool. This book certainly opened my eyes!”

—Michael A. Serchia, Director of Human Resources, International Coffee & Tea

1

CONFESSIONS OF AN INFO-HAMSTER

I was working peacefully in my office when the door slowly opened and shut with a click. I looked up but no one was there. “You’d better be able to help me!” said a small voice. *Was this a joke?*

I stood up and *that’s* when I saw him. Trudging across the floor, tugging on his tie, was a small, nervous-looking white hamster with brown spots. He was wearing a dark blue business suit and carrying a small black briefcase. He looked tired and defeated.

“I hear you’re the so-called productivity expert,” he said. “I’m Harold.”

I leaned down to shake his paw, “Pleased to meet you, Harold. And yes, my passion is helping professionals lead more productive and fulfilling lives.”

Harold raised his eyes hopefully. “Maybe I’m in the right place after all,” he muttered.

Once I'd gotten over my initial shock that Harold was a hamster, I realized that he was my 1:30 PM appointment.

"Welcome, Harold! Please sit down and tell me what brings you here."

Harold hopped into a chair facing my desk. As he leaned back, his wireless personal digital assistant (PDA) buzzed loudly. Harold looked down at it, lost his balance, and almost fell through the gap in the back of the chair. He scrambled frantically to keep from falling and eventually regained his composure.

"Okay, okay. Here's my story. Five years ago, I landed my dream job: Human Resources Director at Foster and Schrubbs Financial. At first, the position was perfect. I was incredibly productive and my team launched several big initiatives." Harold frowned and shifted in his seat, "But a couple of years ago, I noticed that I was working harder and harder and getting less and less done."

"How'd that feel?"

"Am I in analysis or something?" quipped Harold, rolling his eyes. "Well, Dr. Freud, I felt stressed. I was getting buried alive by email, voice mail, and meeting notes. I had information coming out of my ears."

Harold pointed at the PDA clipped to his belt. "Then I got this thing. At first I liked being connected 24-7, but soon I fell even further behind and..."

"Yes?"

"To make matters worse," Harold said softly as he picked at some loose fur on his wrist, "and this is embarrassing to admit," he leaned forward and whispered, "Lately, I'm having trouble finding stuff."

I leaned forward and whispered, "What kind of *stuff*, Harold?"

“Well, I’ll store an email and when I really need it — I can’t find it! Things just vaporize! And don’t get me started on my team’s shared storage drive; everyone’s storing documents differently; no one knows how to clean it up; it’s a mess! I spend a lot of time requesting resends and recreating documents that are missing. I’m staying late just to keep up.”

“So work is spilling over into your personal life?”

Harold raised his furry eyebrows thoughtfully. He reached into his pocket and produced an impossibly small picture. I squinted and saw that it was Harold’s family: a lovely wife and two beautiful children.

“Nice family.”

“Upset family,” corrected Harold wearily. “Thanks to wireless technology, I’m always online. Carol’s really frustrated with the amount of time I spend working after-hours.”

He held up his paws with an exasperated look. “The kids hate it when I do email on Saturday or Sunday. But part of me actually looks forward to weekends just so I can catch up on work. Sometimes, I miss a soccer game or dance recital but if I don’t keep up...” Harold shrugged his little hamster shoulders as if to say, “*I just don’t know anymore.*”

“So your dream job’s become a nightmare?”

Harold nodded. “I feel like I’m losing... me.”

He continued quietly, “I used to love learning new things. I was thrilled to get to the office each morning. Now I dread it. I feel like... like...” Harold struggled for the right words.

“Like a hamster on a wheel?” I offered.

“Yes!” shouted Harold, bolting upright in his chair, “I’ve become a *hamster on a wheel!* Running faster and harder, but getting nowhere.”

I suddenly realized that Harold was unaware that he'd actually turned into a hamster. Although I'd helped countless professionals who felt and acted like hamsters, Harold was the first that actually *changed* into one! Apparently his metamorphosis had been so gradual that he hadn't noticed.

Harold paused and let out a deep sigh. "When I was younger, I had a much different vision of how my life would unfold."

"Tell me about that."

Harold raised his eyebrows and stared at the ground. He looked like he was trying to recall a distant memory.

"Well, I dreamed I'd have this really fulfilling job. I pictured myself surrounded by brilliant people working on these high-level, high-impact team projects — exciting stuff, life-changing stuff. I also imagined that I'd have much more time with my family, to laugh with friends, work out, garden, reflect." Harold smiled wryly, "I never thought I'd spend every waking hour stressing over email and feeling like a hamster on a wheel."

2

A NEW WAY TO WORK

Harold raised his paws in frustration. “So you’re the expert. How do I get off the wheel?”

“You fight back, Harold. There’s a better way to work.”

“Yeah, yeah,” he said looking tense, “I’ve taken a couple time-management classes, but they didn’t help.”

“Harold, this isn’t a *time*-management problem. It’s an *information*-management problem.”

“It is?”

“Yes! Too much email and information is gushing into your life. Don’t get me wrong; email is an amazing communication tool. But suddenly, it’s keeping a lot of people from getting things done. Most professionals feel like they’re stuck on a nonstop wheel-of-information overwhelm.”