

Fujitsu Statement of the Month

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E-mail isn't dead – but the future holds some interesting alternatives
Benno Zollner, Chief Information Officer at Fujitsu Technology Solutions

Early reports that e-mail is a dying technology, headed for electronic oblivion alongside the fax, telex and 56k modem, are perhaps exaggerated – to misquote Mark Twain. However, as argued by Benno Zollner, Chief Information Officer at Fujitsu Technology Solutions, although he's not ready to give up e-mail today, "never say never", because a nascent communications technology of today could be the e-mail killer of the future.

Modern corporations cannot survive without e-mail. Most CIOs these days would no doubt agree. Let's keep in mind, though, that there are already enough historical examples of where a prediction has become famous chiefly because it turned out to be so far off the mark: Bill Gates stating that 640kb computer memory would be enough for anybody, and Gottlieb Daimler's estimate that global demand for cars would never exceed one million, because of the limited number of drivers. These are statements to remember when contemplating new technologies that might replace e-mail – especially since I think that in the future, there will certainly be a post-e-mail era when we use many more devices and protocols to communicate than just e-mail.

Looking forwards, the convergence of voice and data in devices such as smartphones is going to continue driving more synergies towards enhanced mobile services – and this will start to erode our dependence on e-mail. In fact, we should expect fundamental changes to the way in which we communicate in the future. Not only will we get used to using collaboration sites and sharing both documents and information real-time amongst several users – but also we will recognize the extended benefits, such as being able to receive instant responses and enjoying discussions without a backlog of messages building up in our mailboxes.

We should also look forwards to new devices that will not only help keep us sane by streamlining communications (honestly, does anyone really enjoy dealing with 150-plus e-mails a day?) but also healthy, by staying connected to health services that can alert us in case of required action, or even summon medical care on our behalf. Think this is too far-fetched? Well, our datacenters – and our cars – are already using this kind of technology.

However, these all lie in the future. For today, I'd reiterate the tenet stated above: e-mail is the essential business tool that has clearly

changed our lives – both privately and professionally. Many of us have multiple e-mail accounts that require attention if we are to stay in touch with our social environment, while at work, we also depend on e-mail. That's true for Fujitsu as much as for any other company I know. Every day, our employees send out more than 400,000 messages.



[Benno Zollner, Chief Information Officer at Fujitsu Technology Solutions](#)

But while we are currently not able to do without e-mail, we must make sure that we can cope with the volumes of messages we receive. That's why, for the well-being of its employees around the world, Fujitsu has put in place guidelines for best dealing with business e-mail – for example our 10 Golden Rules that include breaking the chain (removing everyone listed in the cc: field) and my favorite solution, of picking up the phone to solve an issue. It's faster – and more personable.

Clearly, we should not become a slave to our e-mails. It's all about setting priorities, and making value-based judgments. We all know that sometimes reading and answering the latest message to ping into your mailbox is not our highest priority – but we still feel strangely compelled to do so.

To close, I'd like to share some personal tips for coping with the daily flood of e-mail – they work for me, and maybe they'll also work for you.

- Don't be afraid to use an Out of Office reply for your e-mail even if you're in the office, at times when you're really busy
- Use an instant messaging program instead of sending an e-mail, for those rapid-fire yes/no questions.
- Don't get too stressed if you do have an e-mail backlog – and prioritize the topics.
- Last, but not least, my favorite: Pick up the phone!

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