



Committee Corner – Technology Committee

Using Outlook 2003 to Organize Your E-Mail

by

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Did you ever take the time in your practice day to think about just exactly how much time you spend looking for those very elusive BUT important e-mails? Most, if not all of us, spend far too much time doing just that and know that it's not time well spent. Yet, when you organize your e-mail reference system into a useful folder hierarchy then it's easy to file messages for later reference.

SETTING UP E-MAIL REFERENCE FOLDERS

The key to keeping e-mails organized is to create an effective e-mail folder hierarchy. When you create this hierarchy in advance and base it on your meaningful objectives and supporting projects, then and only then, can you more easily discern what is worth keeping and what should be discarded!

When working in Outlook you do so by pointing your mouse to **New** in the **File** menu, and then clicking on **Folder**. Now in the **Create New Folder** dialog box, in the **Name** box, type your name for the folder, i.e. Divorce Law Issues. Always keep in mind what your objectives are for these folders and/or subfolders.

Now in the **Create New Folder** dialog box in the **Folder contains** box click the type of folder that you want to create, i.e. for storing e-mail items then just click on **Mail and Post Items**. Now in the **Select where to place folder** list, select a location for the folder and then click **OK**.

MOVING YOUR E-MAIL MESSAGES

Now as you should know when your e-mail messages arrive they go directly into your Inbox. So in order for you to organize the messages that you wish to retain in your newly created e-mail reference system, you need to move them to the folders that you have just created.

To do so you simply click on the message you want to move and drag it over to the folder you have developed for it. Likewise, if you desire to move a range of messages merely click the first message and hold down your shift key and then click to the last message in the range. If the messages are nonadjacent just hold down the **CTRL** key and click each message. If you desire your e-mails to go directly into your created folders, you simply create a rule for those specific e-mails. After the rule has been created messages with those specific criteria will automatically appear in your specified folders.

Rule creation is a simple matter of clicking on **Actions** and then **Create Rule** after you have the e-mail open. You can then specify the criteria for the e-mail such as the header of it or the subject of it. You can create a lot of conditions to allow only certain items into certain folders.

Many times e-mails have attachments and in those cases you may decide that you need the entire e-mail for its context or only the document, which can stand alone. If the e-mail is of no importance, simply save the document in your my Documents folder and delete the e-mail message. If you need the information of the e-mail then save it to your Outlook folder reference systems folders. However, if the document and the e-mail need each other so as to be meaningful to you, I suggest that you save both items in your e-mail reference system.

As an added tip I recommend that you store your documents on your hard disk whenever possible, first off you have more storage space there and, more importantly, the search function in your e-mail reference system searches only through e-mail items and not any of the documents attached to them, while in the My Documents folders search function does a search through documents!

CONCLUSION

Keep in mind that an effective e-mail system of reference will help you to find critical data much more easily and it will dramatically reduce the amount of time you spend trying to manage

all of your e-mails. Most statistics show that, if used properly, an organized e-mail system such as this can save you up to 50 minutes or more each day, and that comes to approximately three weeks a year! Just think now you have three more weeks every year of billable hours but frankly you should just spend it relaxing and knowing that your e-mails are taking care of themselves.

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