

NCDIT · GCC · LUNCH & LEARN

Email Bankruptcy & Information Overload

Reclaim your attention, tame the inbox, and put Copilot to work — for every tier.

Presented by **Heather Masters, Senior Cloud Solution Architect**
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40 min · interactive

★ LIVE POLL • 60 SECONDS

How full is YOUR inbox right now?

No judgment. Grab your phone — scan the code and vote. We'll show the results live.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| ☒ | Inbox Zero hero | 0 unread |
| ☐ | Under control | < 100 unread |
| ☐ | Getting heavy | 100 – 1,000 |
| ☐ | Drowning | 1,000 – 10,000 |
| ☐ | Bankruptcy imminent | 10,000+ |



How Full Is Your
Inbox? – Fill out
form

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

Information overload, by the numbers

121

emails received
by the average worker
every day

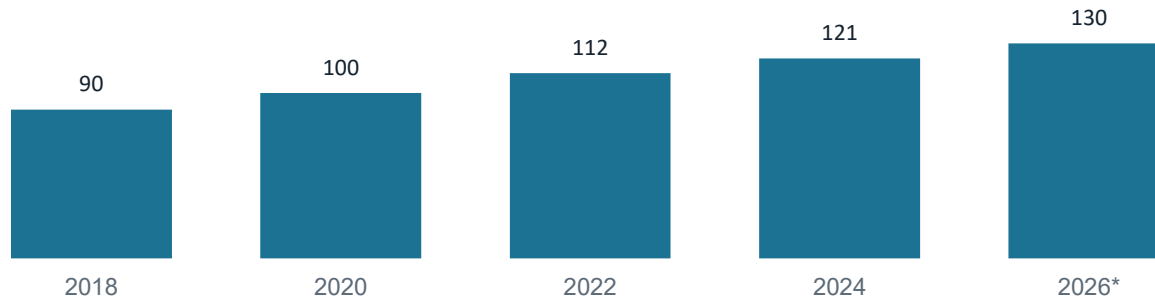
28%

of the workweek
spent reading &
answering email

~23 min

to fully refocus
after a single
interruption

Daily emails per worker are climbing



The point

Your inbox isn't a to-do list — it's other people's priorities landing in your lap. The volume will not slow down. Your **system** has to.

**projected · figures are widely-cited industry averages (Radicati, McKinsey, UC Irvine); use as directional, not exact.*

DEFINITION

What is “Email Bankruptcy”?

A deliberate reset: you accept you'll never catch up on the backlog, move it all out of the way at once, and start fresh with a clean, managed inbox.

Term popularized c. 2004 by Prof. Lawrence Lessig; the idea dates back to email itself.

When it makes sense

✓ Consider it when...

Backlog is in the thousands and untouched for 30+ days · the guilt costs more than the content · you've just changed roles or returned from long leave.

✗ Think twice when...

Items may be public records or under legal hold · open commitments live only in your inbox · you'd delete rather than archive. In government, never permanently delete — archive.

Reframe it: bankruptcy isn't giving up — it's *closing the old ledger* so a working system can start.

The hidden cost of a noisy inbox

1

Context switching

Every 'quick check' fractures deep work. Refocusing after each interruption can take ~23 minutes.

2

Decision fatigue

Hundreds of micro-decisions (read? reply? file?) drain the same energy you need for real work.

3

The “always-on” tax

Notifications blur work and rest, feeding stress and burnout — a real risk in mission-driven public service.

4

Risk & compliance drift

Buried messages hide records, deadlines, and legal holds. Overload is a governance problem, not just a personal one.

★ LIVE WORD CLOUD

In ONE word — how does your inbox make you feel?

Submit a single word. Bigger = more people said it. Watch the room's mood appear in real time.



[Inbox Feelings – Fill out form](#)

Overwhelmed

Anxious

Behind

Guilty

Buried

Numb

Hopeful?

Chaos

Relentless

Sample cloud shown — your live results will vary.

KNOW YOUR TIER — NOBODY LEFT BEHIND

Two “Copilots,” one goal

Everyone here can use AI to fight overload. What differs is how deeply it reaches into your mailbox.

Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat

Included with M365 · “Basic” · no add-on

EVERYONE

- ✓ **Summarize** pasted email text, threads, or notes you drop into chat
- ✓ **Draft & rewrite** replies, tone shifts, shorter/clearer versions
- ✓ **Brainstorm** inbox rules, folder structure, prioritization logic
- ! **Web-grounded** not your live mailbox — you bring the content to it

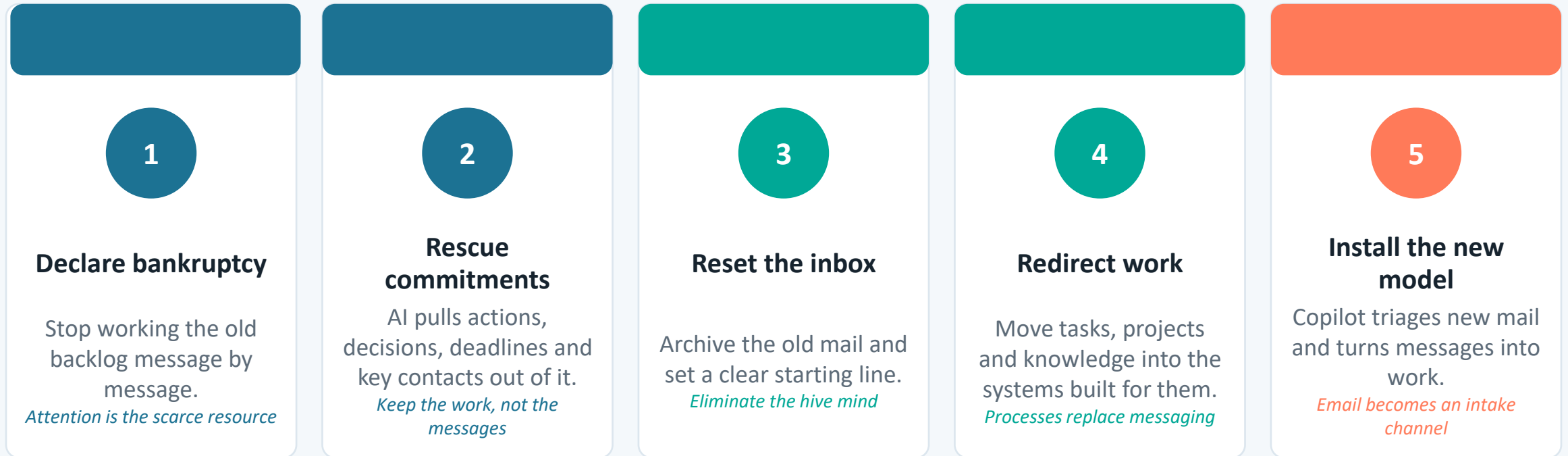
Microsoft 365 Copilot

Paid license · “Premium” · in your apps

PREMIUM

- ✓ **In Outlook** Summarize long threads inline; Draft & Coaching by Copilot
- ✓ **Prioritize** surface what needs you; catch up after time away
- ✓ **Work-grounded** reasons over YOUR mail, files & meetings via Graph
- ✓ **Everywhere** Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Copilot Chat

The Cal Newport model: five moves to reset email



⚠ **Government rule:** “Archive” moves mail out of sight but keeps it retained & discoverable. Never bulk-**delete** — public-records and legal-hold obligations still apply. When unsure, ask Records Management first.

Five steps to a clean inbox

1 Stop digging. You will not read years of old email one at a time.

2 Save what matters. Copilot pulls out the promises, dates and names.

3 Start fresh. Archive the old mail and begin from today.

4 Move work out of email. Tasks and projects belong in Teams and Planner.

5 Let Copilot keep it clean. New mail is sorted into a short daily to-do list.

Keep it clean with the 4 D's

Touch each new message once. Decide in seconds, not minutes.

D

Delete / Archive

If it needs no action and isn't a record, clear it. If it might be a record, archive.

D

Delegate

Not yours? Forward to the right owner with one clear ask and a due date.

D

Defer

Needs real work? Flag it, or drag it to your task list / calendar for a set time.

D

Do

Under ~2 minutes? Just do it now and move on. Don't re-read it later.

Copilot booster: *"Summarize this thread and tell me if it needs a reply, a decision, or nothing."* Works in Chat (paste) or Outlook (Premium).

Source: Microsoft, "Best practices for Outlook" (Microsoft Support)

Copilot in Outlook does the heavy lifting



Summarize

Collapse a 40-message thread into key points and decisions — one click at the top of the email.



Draft & Coaching

Write a first draft from a prompt; “Coaching by Copilot” scores your tone, clarity, and reader sentiment before you send.



Catch up / prioritize

Ask Copilot what needs you after time away; it reasons over your mail, files, and meetings.



Meeting-ready

“What did I miss from Jordan this week?” — pulls related mail, chats, and docs together.

Where to find it: the Copilot icon at the top of the reading pane and in a new email’s ribbon. Availability in GCC varies — confirm in NCDIT’s tenant.

EVERYONE • COPILOT CHAT (INCLUDED)

No Premium? You can still put AI to work

Copilot Chat is web-grounded — so YOU bring the content. Paste, ask, done. Fully within enterprise data protection.

1

Summarize a wall of text *Paste a long thread or policy email → “Give me the 5 key points and any deadlines.”*

2

Draft the reply *“Write a polite reply declining this meeting and proposing Thursday.” Then paste & tweak in Outlook.*

3

Design your rules *“Suggest Outlook rules to auto-file newsletters and route my boss’s email to top priority.”*

4

Prioritize a dump *Paste a list of subject lines → “Rank these 1–10 by urgency and tell me which I can ignore.”*

Access at microsoft365.com/chat or the Copilot app/tab in Teams. Look for the green shield = protected.

Build a system so the flood never returns

Focused Inbox

Let Outlook split important from 'Other.'
Train it once, it learns.

✓ Classic ✓ New

Rules

Auto-file, flag, or forward by
sender/keyword. Set once, save hours.

✓ Classic ✓ New (fewer options)

Sweep

One click to bulk-clear or auto-delete all-
but-latest from a chatty sender.

✗ Classic (Clean Up) ✓ New

Categories & @Mentions

Color-code and filter to @mentions of
you — the messages that truly need you.

✓ Classic ✓ New

Unsubscribe / digest

Kill newsletters you never open; batch
the rest into a weekly digest.

✗ Classic ✓ New

Schedule & Snooze

Send later, snooze non-urgent mail to
resurface when you can act.

~ Classic (send later) ✓ New

Let Copilot set it up: *"Give me step-by-step Outlook instructions to create a rule that files all NCDIT newsletters into a 'Read Later' folder."*

★ TRY IT NOW · PHONES / LAPTOPS OUT

Steal these prompts — copy, paste, go

Open Copilot Chat (everyone) or Copilot in Outlook (Premium). Try one now.

PROMPT 1

The Untangler

“Summarize this email thread. List decisions made, open questions, and who owes what by when.”

PROMPT 2

The Diplomat

“Draft a warm but firm reply asking for the report by Friday. Keep it under 120 words.”

PROMPT 3

The Bouncer

“Here are 15 subject lines. Rank by urgency and tell me which I can safely archive.”

PROMPT 4

The Architect

“Suggest 5 Outlook rules and a folder structure to cut my inbox noise in half.”

Prove it — 3 quick questions

Q1

In government, the safe email-bankruptcy move is to...

A) Delete all · B) Archive all · C) Ignore it

B) Archive all

Q2

Which Copilot can summarize an email you PASTE in, with no paid license?

A) Copilot Chat (Basic) · B) Neither · C) Only Premium

A) Copilot Chat

Q3

The 4 D's are Delete/Archive, Delegate, Defer and...

A) Delay · B) Delete-again · C) Do

C) Do

DO IT RIGHT AFTER LUNCH

The 20-minute inbox reset challenge

0–3 min	☐	Create a folder “Backlog-2026.” Move everything older than 2 weeks into it. (Archive, not delete.)
3–8 min	☐	Turn on Focused Inbox. Sweep your 3 noisiest senders. Unsubscribe from 3 lists.
8–14 min	☐	Create 2 rules: one routing your manager/records to priority, one filing newsletters.
14–18 min	☐	Open Copilot Chat. Summarize your longest remaining thread. Draft one reply.
18–20 min	☐	Book a 10-min daily “inbox triage” on your calendar. Protect it.

Print this slide or drop it in Teams — check the boxes as you go.

Guardrails for government

Use AI to move faster — without crossing a compliance line.

When in doubt

Ask Records Management or your ISO before deleting, forwarding externally, or pasting anything sensitive.

Four non-negotiables

1

Records first Email may be a public record (NC G.S. §132). “Bankruptcy” means archive & retain — never bulk-delete.

2

Legal holds win If a hold applies, nothing gets removed — Copilot cleanup and Sweep don’t change that.

3

Copilot respects permissions It only surfaces what you can already access, and honors Purview sensitivity labels.

4

Stay inside the boundary Use the tenant’s approved Copilot with data protection. Don’t paste work content into consumer AI.

Your 7-day plan & three things to remember

Day 1

Declare bankruptcy —
archive the backlog

Day 2

Turn on Focused Inbox
+ build 2 rules

Days 3–5

Triage daily with the 4
D's (10 min)

Day 6

Learn one Copilot
prompt a day

Day 7

Review: what's
working? Adjust rules

1

Systems beat willpower

A clean inbox is a design, not a
personality trait.

2

Copilot is for everyone

Premium reaches in; Basic Chat lets you
bring content to it.

3

Archive, never delete

In government, records & holds always
come first.

THANK YOU

Declare independence from your inbox.

Do the 20-minute reset before you leave the building today. Your future self says thanks.

Take these with you

- The 4 try-it-now prompts (posted in Teams)
- The 20-minute reset checklist
- Copilot Chat: microsoft365.com/chat