CPA
Practice Advisor

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Isaac M. O'Bannon • Oct. 10, 2012

How many email addresses do you have or do you manage? You certainly have at least one for work, hopefully with your firm name as a part of the email address, but you may also be the person that info@firmname.com emails, or other variations, go to.

Then, you also have at least one personal email address, but possibly more than that. Off the top of my head, I have at least 14 email accounts. I'm not saying that I have to

manually go and check 14 different accounts, since several of these email addresses

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below.)

I also have at least six email accounts, however, that are either personal or related to my LLC or a various side project. Many of the tax and accounting professionals I meet have entities other than their practice, such as our own executive editor, Darren Root, who runs his accounting firm, the separate RootWorks consultancy, and also guides our editorial processes. As such, he has at least one email account for each of these entities (probably more than that), as well as personal email accounts.

As for my accounts, most of them feed into my personal computer's Outlook Express, but I also have access to them online and from my mobile devices. I could probably let go of a couple (like the Yahoo! email I've had since 1996), but I have a sort of fondness for the old account. It is pretty much unusable these days due to spam, but I do keep it active and use the account occasionally when signing up for things online.

Your Email Name Reflects Your Brand

This may seem excessive, particularly to professionals with only two or three total email addresses, but it's partly process driven, and also to protect the different brands of each activity. Having your company/firm name in your email is essential, because it reinforces branding, whereas using a generic free email account (like Yahoo! Or Gmail) simply looks unprofessional.

While every firm should have a website that reflects its brand, those who don't can still get personalized firm email addresses that reflect your practice name. Several vendors offer this option (Google the phrase "personalized email"), but another more professional option is offered by CPA2Biz, the business arm of the AICPA.

Their CPA.com Email Solutions, which won a 2012 Innovation Award, offers two options: Full email with send and receive capabilities, or an account that receives

emails and forwards them to whatever existing email you currently have. Both

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spammers that your email address is valid, making it more valuable and it will be sold to many more spammers.

- Also- For those who have a solo practice or a home office, overly detailed out-of-office messages (like: I'll be on vacation between Nov. 20-26th) can tell potential thieves the best time to visit. So, if you choose to use auto-reply, at least be vague.

2) **Do use other email tools.** In addition to back-end Exchange server policies usually managed by an IT person,Outlook offers several user-side rules, such as:

1. **Standard Rules & Alerts** – Tell Outlook to automatically put emails from certain people/clients into specific folders. This can also be done for emails with specific words in the subject.
2. **Custom Rules** – There are some words that will never be in a legitimate email (or at least not an important one). These are most often vulgarities and misspelled spam words like m0rtgage, V1agra, etc. Also, unless you have clients or friends in Nigeria, you probably won't be getting notification of any inheritances via email. You can take all of these undesired words and tell Outlook to delete emails containing them immediately, or to put them into a special "probably spam" folder.

3) **Change your email address occasionally.** Simply adding the number 1, 2 , etc. to the end of your name every couple of years can dramatically reduce spam. Let your regular clients know by simply adding a note on each your outbound emails for at least 30 days in advance.

4) **Don’t post your email address openly on websites.** There are bots that

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