

AUTOMATION SECRETS

Email Focuser

Purpose

We spend too much time on email. Plain and simple. I work with my assistant each quarter to reduce the amount of time I spend on email. Our current goal is 15 minutes per day. The goal of this tool is to give you the resources to spend less and less time on email.

This tool was created by my assistant, Tamra, to give me freedom over one aspect of my inbox, without giving me freedom over my entire inbox.

The My Eyes email folder saves me over 45 minutes per day. That's 150 hours per year.

How is this different from the Zapier Zaps and Email Signature tricks?

Those tricks are about writing emails. This is about focusing your inbox.

Many inboxes now have a "Focused" feature or something like it, where it filters out some (but not that much) junk mail so your inbox is only what you want to see. In this tool, I'll show you how to take it to the next level.

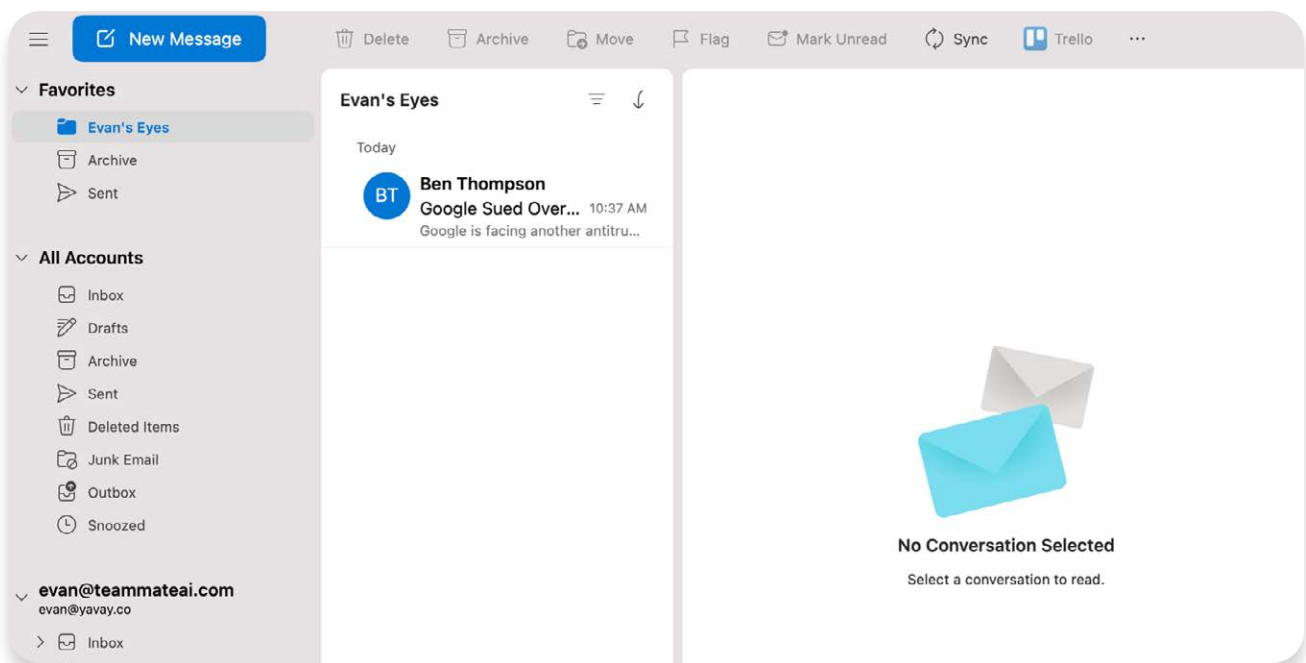
What's not in the "My Eyes" folder?

- Marketing
- Junk
- Non-urgent clients
- People who only would email me about something in my personal life
- Shipping confirmations
- Calendar invites
- Team members that aren't direct-reports to me
- ...anything that's not a direct email from someone who I name is very important.

In the picture attached, Ben Thompson writes a newsletter called "Stratechery." He keeps me informed each day as to what's happening in tech. He gets the highway.

Key clients get the highway. Key team members. My direct reports. Key collaborators.

My Eyes Folder



With the “My Eyes” (in this case, “Evan’s Eyes”) folder, what you can do is set rules for who gets highway-access to your attention. I reserve this for key clients and collaborators and members of my team. Not all clients get this access, not all team members get this access, and even family members don’t get this access. This is highway-to-urgent access. The key with the “My Eyes” folder is that it’s not reviewed or responded to by my assistant, and it contains emails I need to deal with.

What does the workflow look like?

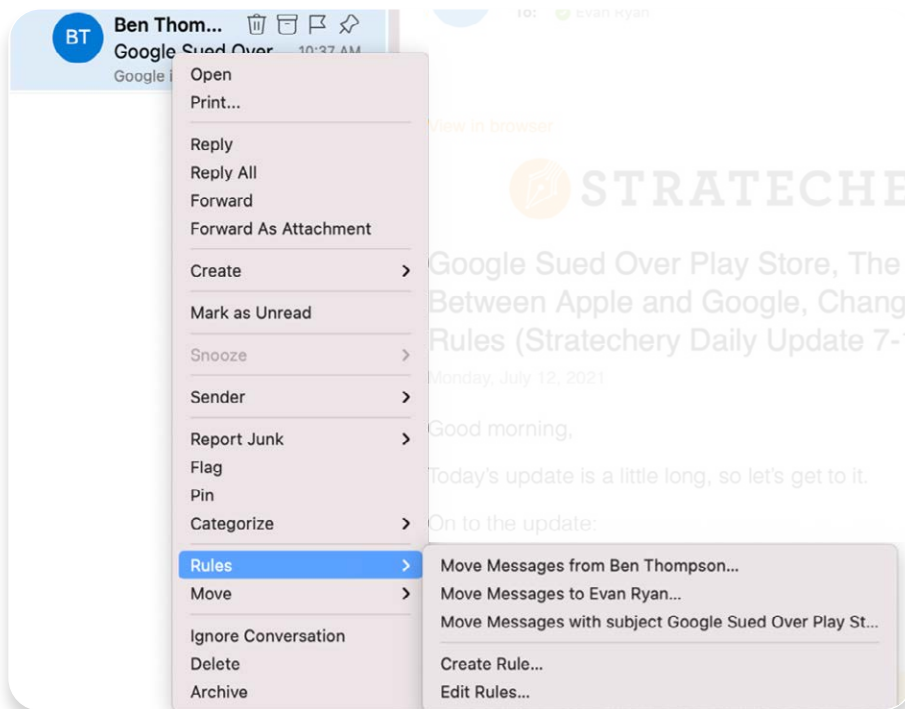
Emails from senders on the highway go directly to the “Evan’s Eyes” folder. They bypass my inbox. My assistant scans all my emails that hit my inbox. If she can respond to them, she does. If she deems them irrelevant for me, she Archives them. If I need to see the email and she can’t respond, she moves it into the “Evan’s Eyes” folder.

What if other emails are important for me to see?

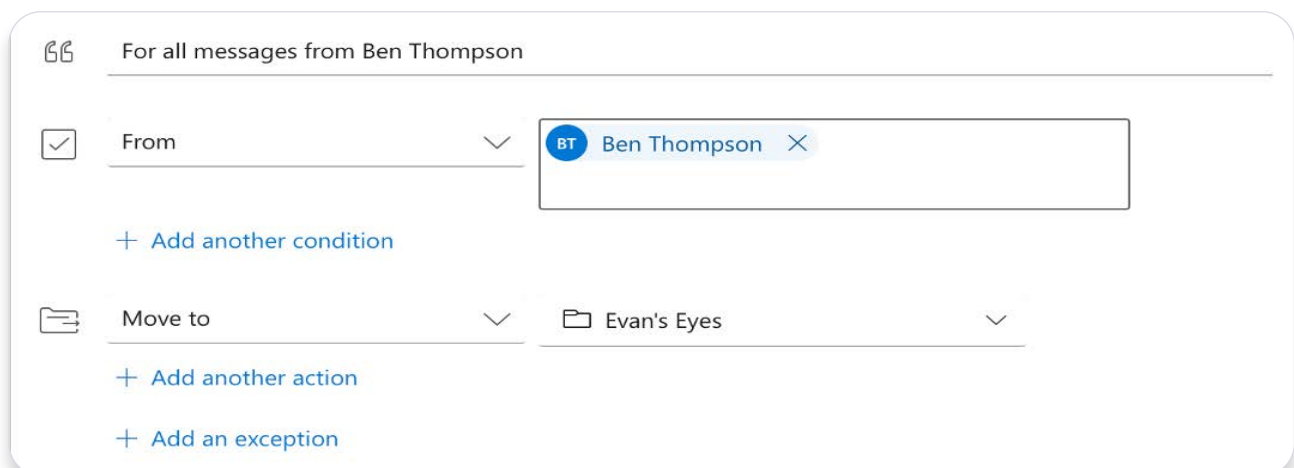
My assistant moves those emails to the “Evan’s Eyes” folder.

How do you set up the “Highway?”

Email rules!



When an email from a person who you'd like to be on the highway comes in, right click. Select “Rules” (all email services have this feature) and choose “Move Messages from [Sender Name]”. Then, select “Move to” and select “My Eyes.” It's that simple!



For every person who goes on the highway, do this.

What's the impact?

You wouldn't believe how much time I spent glancing at, and deleting, junk. I've received over 40 emails today, and it's a slow day. Of those, I really needed to look at 3.

Last week, I received over 321 emails. Of that, I probably needed to look at 25. I only needed to respond to fewer than 20.

Now, I don't waste time on junk, marketing, or anything that isn't moving the ball forward in my business. Emails that aren't relevant to me are emails that aren't getting my attention, because my time and attention are finite. If I'm focused on someone's email, I can't be focused on anything else.

This does not mean I don't receive any marketing emails or newsletters. In fact, I do. When my assistant thinks I should see it. A great sale is going on at my favorite store? She will let me know. A newsletter I'm subscribed to looks interesting and relevant? She moves it to my folder.

If I didn't have an assistant, I would check and clear out my inbox once/day, at the end of the day. Because I have an assistant, she can take care of it for me.

This tool is even more useful if you don't have an assistant.

Everyone is bombarded with information and people trying to get our attention. Only give it to the people that matter most.