



# *Power of an hour*

## *8 tips to save you time with technology*

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<http://www.ciaops.com>



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## *Introduction*

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## *An hour a day?*

Do you have any idea what the impact is of one person saving as little as an hour in their work day? Over a normal working week that's 5 hours, over a working month that's 20 hours, over a year that's 240 hours. Assuming an eight hour work day that adds up to a saving of 30 work days a year! Significantly more than a whole working month! This means that you can get done in 11 months what it takes other people 12. Alternatively, you only need to work for 11 months and have a one month off and still get the same amount of work accomplished. Either way you look at it, saving as little as one hour a day can add up to something really big.

Time is the most precious resource we have simply because we can never get any more. You can always get more money but you'll never get more time. Interestingly, we all receive exactly the same allocation of time yet some people seem to accomplish so much more with theirs. Why is that? First and foremost they understand how precious their time is. They therefore value it and make every effort to maximize how they use it. Next, they examine ways to make the most of the time they have and maximize what can be automated, streamlined or eliminated.

Currently most people probably believe they are more efficient because they are using technology but are they really? Many now spend more time dealing with work related issues outside normal working hours because of technologies like email and mobile phones. People also seem to spend most of their day being interrupted by technology in some way, emails demanding responses to phones ringing and flashing icons on web sites.

*On average, knowledge workers can expect three minutes of uninterrupted work on any task before being interrupted. Sources of interruption include e-mail, instant messages, phone calls, text messages, co-workers, and other distractions. The majority of these distractions are attended to immediately.*

- *"Infomania: Why we can't afford to ignore it any longer" by Nathan Zeldes, David Sward, and Sigal Louchheim*

It is not hard to see how time is being burgled away by technology without even realizing it.

Our belief was that technology would set us free and provide us with unlimited free time and yet it appears to have done the complete opposite. We are now slaves to time sinks like email, the Web and mobile communications. What happened to our leisure time? What happened to just unplugging and enjoying the world and people around us? In all honesty, we are turning into the machines like those that we built thinking they would set us free.

Technology is fantastic and certainly has the potential to free us from much of the tedious and repetitive aspects of our work if we configure and implement it correctly. Here is the key to success that most overlook. What good is technology if it isn't making your job easier? What good is technology if it is not allowing you to complete your job faster? What good is technology if it is getting in the way? Simple answer - not much. Hopefully this is where this document can help.

The secret to achieving something is to firstly set a goal. The simple aim of this document is to provide you with eight technology suggestions that in part or combination will save you at least one hour in your workday. If it saves you more, all the better but the goal is to help you save at least one hour a day. Most of the solutions provided here are freely available, if not there is usually only a minimal cost of implementation. However, it is strongly believed that any implementation cost is minor when compared to the time savings made.

There are so many additional strategies about being more productive that unfortunately this document can't hope to cover. More information about this can be found in the [Where to go from here](#) section at the end of the document.

If you are ready to start saving time and being more productive then read on.

## *1. Dual screens*



Are you finding that there is never enough screen real estate? Do you find that you are always switching between windows to see all your work? Simply having a large screen may not necessarily improve the problem, in fact it may make it worse. The secret is to have dual screens.

An article from the New York Times cites:

*Survey after survey shows that whether you measure your productivity in facts researched, alien spaceships vaporized, or articles written, adding an extra monitor will give your output a considerable boost — 20 percent to 30 percent, according to a survey by Jon Peddie Research.*

- *NY Times, "The virtues of a second screen", April 20,2006*

And from the actual Jon Peddie Research comes:

*Productivity estimations average to 42% improvement.*

- *JPR Special Report, "The Multiple Display Market and Consumer Attitudes"*

Dual screens work in the same way that we have been working for hundreds of years. How? Because they make our computers more like books. You can position something on one page while editing and revising on another without having to constantly minimize and maximize.

Unfortunately, not every computer is dual screen capable since it requires a video card that supports two monitors. However if you currently don't have suitable hardware then there is software available that can achieve similar results. One such product is available from Microsoft and is called *Desktops*. It is a free download available from:

<http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/cc817881.aspx>

*"Desktops allows you to organize your applications on up to four virtual desktops. Read email on one, browse the web on the second, and do work in your productivity software on the third, without the clutter of the windows you're not using. After you configure hotkeys for switching desktops, you can create and switch desktops either by clicking on the tray icon to open a desktop preview and switching window, or by using the hotkeys."*

- *Microsoft Windows Sysinternals*

So if you current system can't be configured to support dual screens then have a look at the Microsoft Desktops software (or similar).

## 2. Learn to touch type



The majority of technology work that people perform today requires entering information via a keyboard. Since the dawn of computing nothing has proved as quick and reliable as using a keyboard. Yet most people are very uncomfortable using them. Most seem to spend hours pecking away using 'one finger typing', in effect wasting valuable time. Given how much time you spend using a keyboard doesn't it make sense that any speed improvement is going to be significantly amplified?

As Alexis on Technology notes:

*"In today's competitive world where everyone is required to work on a computer, the single finger or two finger typing will not do. Every one who uses the computer (especially the information worker who uses it for performing almost 80% of his/her tasks) needs to learn how to type correctly—i.e., learn touch-typing. Touch typists can do more work in fewer hours, giving them extra time to devote to other tasks as their typing speed will increase many times."*

- Alexis on Technology, July 29, 2005

There are plenty of touch typing courses available, however the following is one that is available on the Internet for free.

<http://www.typingweb.com/>

It is a good idea to try and track your typing improvements over time as method of feedback. It is pretty certain that as your typing speeds improves so will your productivity freeing you to achieve more every day.

### *3. Keyboard shortcuts*



Even though most computer access is now via a mouse the keyboard can still be used for many functions. The advantage with using keyboard shortcuts is that less time is lost by removing hands from the keyboard and transferring to the mouse.

It is very worthwhile to spend time learning the most common keyboard commands for the applications you use most often. These will typically be:

*a. Windows/Mac*

<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/126449>

<http://support.apple.com/kb/HT1343>

*b. Microsoft Word*

<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/290938>

*c. Microsoft Outlook*

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook/HP030842231033.aspx>

*d. Firefox*

<http://support.mozilla.com/en-US/kb/Keyboard+shortcuts>

*e. Internet Explorer*

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/winfamily/ie/ie7/quickref.msp>

There is no need to memorize every keyboard shortcut combination but it is well worthwhile to learn the most common.

The best trick is to start off with a few of the most helpful and once you have mastered these then learn a few more and so on.

## 4. Email rules



Most people are enveloped with an increasing volume of emails every day and the ability to effectively deal with this flood can have a huge impact on productivity. There are many different techniques for coping with email overload but one of the most effective productivity improvements that can be implemented is using email rules. In most cases emails are simply all dumped into a single location, the Inbox. All emails arriving in the Inbox typically do not warrant the same priority but since they are scattered all over the one location it becomes very hard to prioritize them efficiently. It therefore makes sense to implement some form of automatic filtering to route the non urgent emails to another location for later review rather than allowing them to fill the Inbox and cause distraction.

*“The survey, of 4,000 people from 150 UK businesses, will show that the average worker wastes one hour every day through inefficient use of email.*

- *Telegraph.co.uk , November 22, 2008*

Most email programs have the ability to automatically route emails to different locations, typically under the inbox, to reduce the clutter. Such rules allow the automatic separation of things like newsletters and subscriptions from personal and business correspondence. They can operate based on various parts of the incoming email including the subject, the sender or even the body of the mail. For example, this means that you can create a rule to route email from a specific email address to a folder.

The following web site gives you the step by step procedure for creating an email rule in Microsoft Outlook.

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook/HP052428971033.aspx>

Most other mail applications have very similar abilities and information for these can usually be found on the Internet.

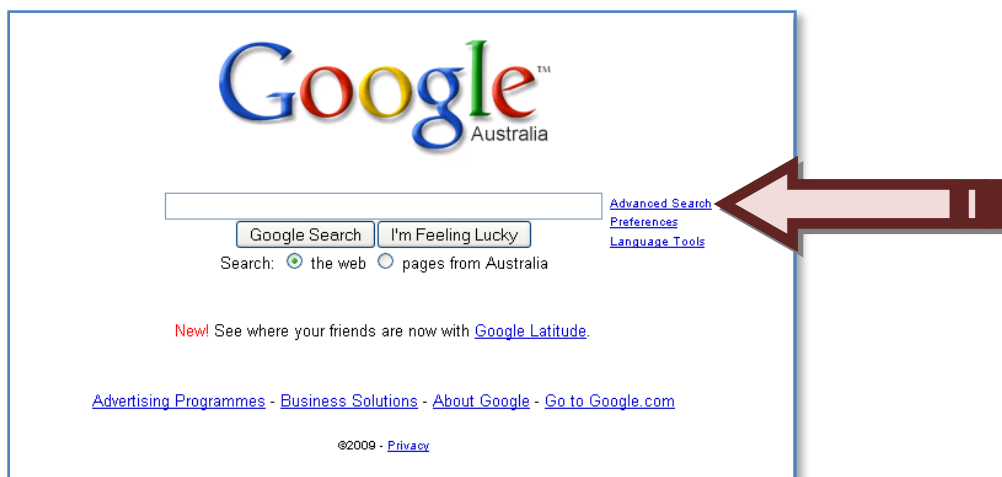
As previously mentioned email is a significant sink of time and needs to be managed effectively to avoid significant losses in productivity. Creating rules, like shown above, is just one way to reduce time wastage with email. For further information about how to improve email productivity see the *[Where to from here section](#)* at the end of the document.

## 5. *Advanced search*

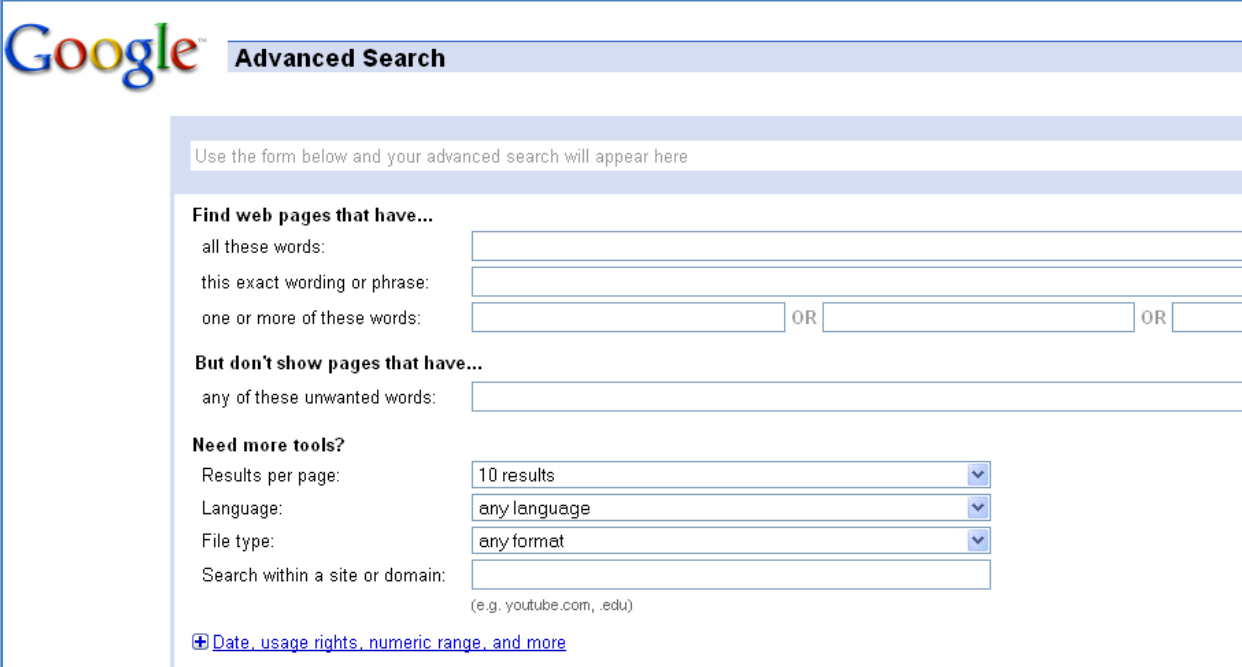


Popular search engines generally allow you to simply type in any text and then search. Many people are frustrated when the results that are returned do not match their criteria or they have to wade through volumes of information. What you may not appreciate is that many popular search engines have advanced search functions that greatly improve the results that you obtain by allowing you to be more specific with what you are searching for. To achieve this all you need to do is spend a little time learning how to use these advanced techniques and then put them into practice.

Given that Google is the most common search engine in use today that is what will be demonstrated here but many of the same features are available on other popular search engines.



When you first bring up the Google page you will notice to the right of the input line a link that says *Advanced Search*.



The screenshot shows the Google Advanced Search page. At the top left is the Google logo, followed by a blue header bar with the text "Advanced Search". Below this is a light blue box containing the instruction "Use the form below and your advanced search will appear here". The main form is divided into several sections:

- Find web pages that have...**
  - all these words: [input field]
  - this exact wording or phrase: [input field]
  - one or more of these words: [input field] OR [input field] OR [input field]
- But don't show pages that have...**
  - any of these unwanted words: [input field]
- Need more tools?**
  - Results per page: [dropdown menu with "10 results" selected]
  - Language: [dropdown menu with "any language" selected]
  - File type: [dropdown menu with "any format" selected]
  - Search within a site or domain: [input field]

(e.g. youtube.com, .edu)

[+ Date, usage rights, numeric range, and more](#)

If you click on that link you will now see a screen that allows you to enter far more information about the topic you are searching for. It is important to remember that the more specific you are with your search query the better the results you will obtain.

Rather than having to do an advanced search every time it is also possible to enter a number of advanced queries directly into the input line in Google using specific syntax. This can be found at:

<http://www.google.com/support/websearch/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=136861>

Some examples include:

- By putting double quotes (" ") around a set of words, you are telling Google to consider the exact words in that exact order without any change.
- Google allows you to specify that your search results must come from a given website.
- Attaching a minus sign (-) immediately before a word indicates that you do not want pages that contain this word to appear in your results
- By attaching a plus sign (+) immediately before a word you are telling Google to match that word precisely as you typed it.

A good 'cheat sheet' for all these operators can be found at:

[http://www.googleguide.com/advanced\\_operators\\_reference.html](http://www.googleguide.com/advanced_operators_reference.html)

One of the biggest advantages of digital information is that it can be indexed and searched very quickly. It is also possible to utilize the advanced search technology built into the desktop. For more information about this see the *Where to go from here* section at the end of the document.

## 6. *Electronic notebooks*



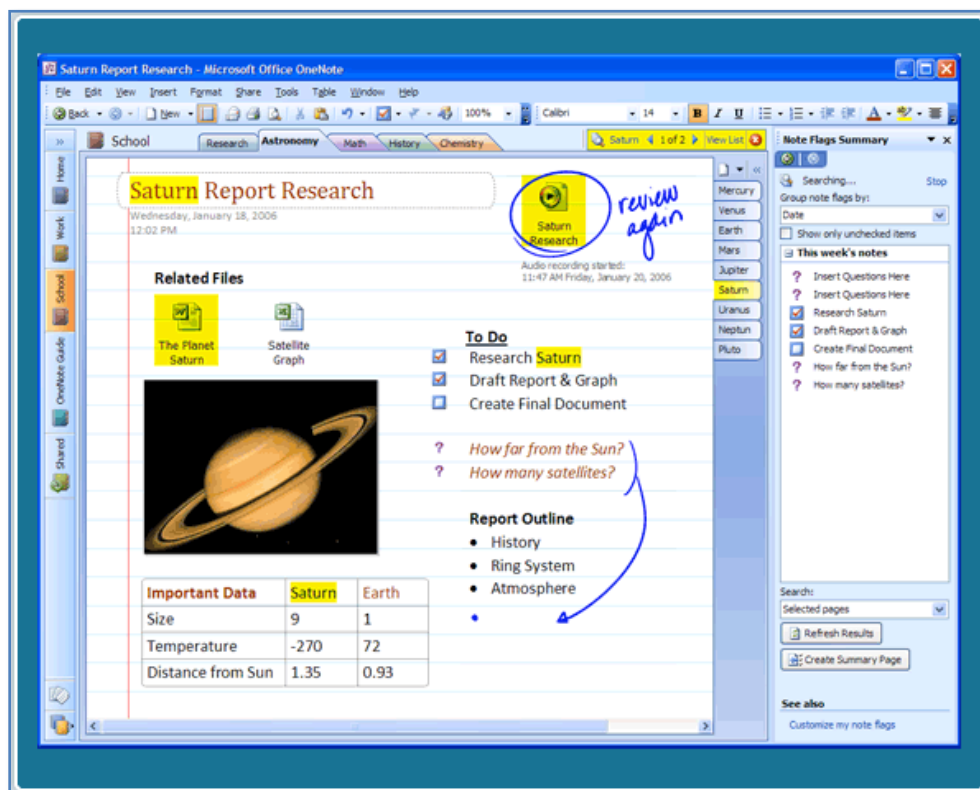
One of the most popular productivity guides at the moment is “Getting Things Done” by David Allen. One of his main points is the fact that our brains are designed for imagining, creating and designing things, they are not designed to hold things. He therefore recommends that we should be getting the things we need to remember out of our heads and recorded somewhere. Doing this frees up the mind to deal with more important matters.

To be comfortable with getting things out of your mind you need a quick and reliable method of storing them. Nothing beats the flexibility of pen and paper however there are a number of electronic tools that you can employ to enhance this further. Saving information into something like a digital notebook has lots of benefits including:

- Ability to be easily backed up and copied.
- Ability to be quickly searched.
- Ability to include information that was cut and pasted from other applications.
- Ability to easily re-organize information if required.

Two of the best digital notebooks currently available are Microsoft OneNote and Evernote.

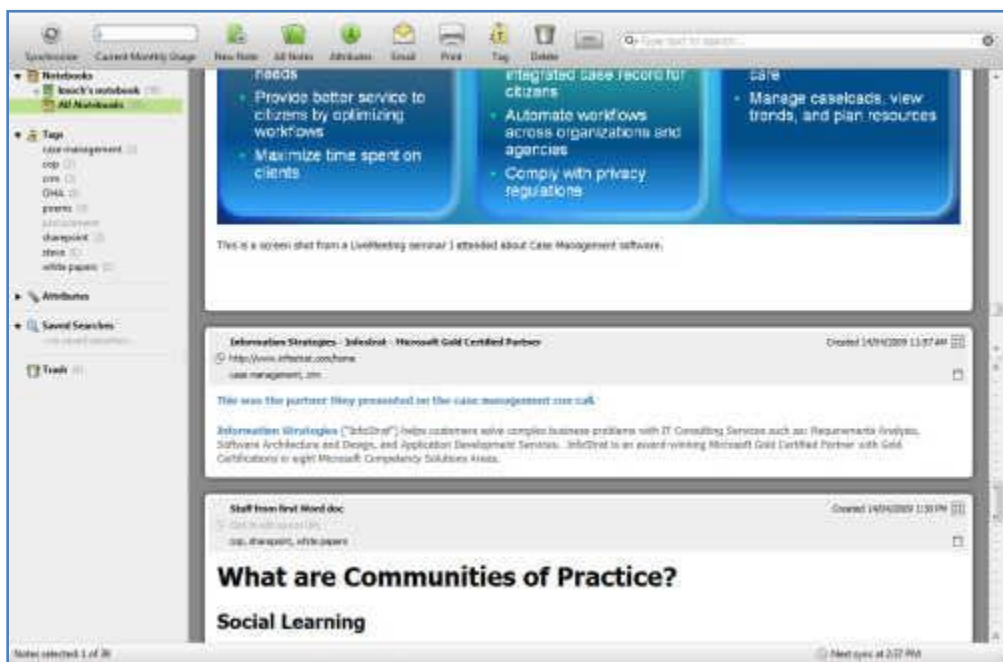
OneNote – [www.onenote.com](http://www.onenote.com)



As you can see from the above screen shot OneNote allows you to capture a variety of information including text, tables, files, graphics and more. It is arranged with a number of sections across the top that each include a number of pages.

Adding information is simple and when installed OneNote extends the functionality of applications like Internet Explorer and Outlook to include the ability to 'Send to OneNote'. This helps you get ad hoc information into a more organized location. OneNote also allows you to share notebooks with others which promotes improved team collaboration.

Evernote – [www.evernote.com](http://www.evernote.com)

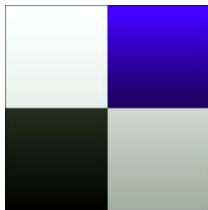


Evernote is very similar to OneNote but automatically includes the option of syncing information to a storage location on the Internet. The free version of EverNote includes a basic level of storage which can be increased via an upgrade to a paid version if desired. Another key difference over OneNote is that Evernote allows you to access your notes via a web page. You can log in to the Evernote web site and add information all through a web browser.

Both OneNote and Evernote support versions that can be installed on mobile devices for even greater flexibility.

A digital notebook should not necessarily be considered as a replacement for what you may currently be using, however given its overall level of functionality it can prove a very handy adjunct to any system you maybe currently utilizing. Both OneNote and Evernote have free or trial versions that allow you to get a feel for the application so you really have nothing to loose by trying these out.

## 7. Social bookmarking



*Delicious* ([www.delicious.com](http://www.delicious.com)) is a web site that allows you to save and categorize web sites. It also allows you to share these with other *Delicious* members. When you save or tag a web site using *Delicious* you are asked to enter information about the site like shown below.

A screenshot of the 'Save a Bookmark' dialog box in the Delicious application. The window title is 'Save a Bookmark'. The Delicious logo and 'Save a Bookmark' text are in the top left, and 'Signed in as directorcia' is in the top right. The form contains the following fields:

- URL:** <http://www.smh.com.au/> with a checkbox for 'do not share'.
- TITLE:** Sydney Morning Herald - Business & World News Australia | smh.com.au
- NOTES:** A text area with a '1000 chars' limit. A red arrow points from a callout box labeled 'Additional notes' to this field.
- TAGS:** A text area with a red arrow pointing from a callout box labeled 'Tags' to it. Below the field, there are sections for 'Recommended Tags' (online, blog) and 'Popular Tags' (news, australia, newspaper, sydney, newspapers, media, daily, smh).

At the bottom right are 'Save' and 'Cancel' buttons.

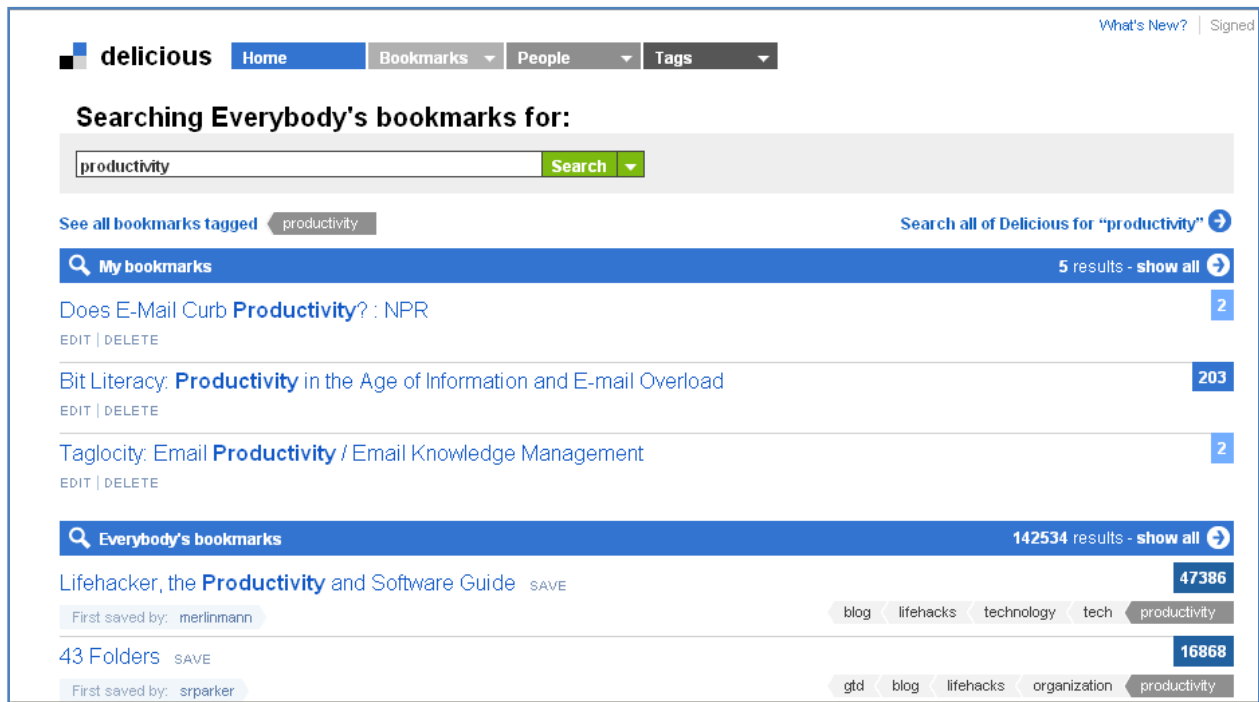
As you can see from the above window, when you decide to save a web site in *Delicious* a dialogue box pops up and asks you to enter additional notes as well a number of tags. Tags are a way to easily categorize the information. *Delicious* presents you with a number of recommended tags and tags that are popular with other *Delicious* members for the web site you are bookmarking. You will also notice the option in the top right where you can elect to not share the bookmark with others. This will ensure that the bookmark remains only available to you and not seen by other *Delicious* members.

*Delicious* allows you to access your bookmarks from any Internet connection as well as providing plug-ins with the most popular browsers so you can bookmark directly from these

applications. The real power of *Delicious* comes from the social networking aspects of *Delicious*. A good introduction to this concept is available from the following video:

*Social bookmarking in plain English* - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x66IV7GOcNU>

For example, say that you were searching for information about productivity. If you used *Delicious* to search for that you would receive something similar to the following:



The search returns information from within your own bookmarks (*My bookmarks*) and also from other *Delicious* users (*Everyone's bookmarks*). Using this method you can easily find information that others have discovered and chosen to save. If you find other individuals who have similar interests you can choose to 'follow' them so that as they post new bookmarks you will be notified.

Thus, a tool like Delicious provides you with not only a simple way to make your web browsing bookmarks available anywhere but also a way to leverage the information others are discovering that may in turn be relevant to you.

## 8. Online storage



People typically need to work on documents and information from multiple locations. This means that copies are emailed backward and forward so they are available on each machine. This is an inefficient and ineffective method of using email and generally causes more problems than it solves. A much better way is save these common documents in some form of online (Internet based) storage. In this manner all information is saved and updated in a single location and can be accessible in from multiple locations quickly and easily.

Online storage allows you to save information to somewhere on the Internet so that it can be accessed from anywhere that you have access to the Internet. You normally create an account on the service using a login and password and you are then able to upload your information. The available size of the online storage accounts depends on which provider you use. Many also have desktop software that you can utilize to automatically synchronize your desktop information with that online.

You may also need to consider privacy issues when you store information online. Although all providers make every effort to ensure that your information is kept secure there is always the possibility that it may be compromised. If the information that you plan to store online is confidential then it is recommended that you consider some form of encryption like Truecrypt ([www.truecrypt.org](http://www.truecrypt.org)) to keep it secure. Some services do automatically include the ability to encrypt online information, however if you are concerned about the confidentiality of the information then it is always recommended that you implement you own independent encryption.

There a number of these facilities but these three will be considered here:

*SkyDrive* – <http://skydrive.live.com>

Is a free service from Microsoft and currently allows you to store up to 25GB of information. You simply need to have or create a Windows Live Id and then use this Id to create a *SkyDrive* account. You are now able to upload and access files directly from a browser.

*GetDropBox* – <http://getdropbox.com>

Has a free option (with a paid upgrade) that allows for 2GB of online storage. One of the advantages that *GetDropBox* has is that it automatically encrypts the data when it is stored online providing an extra level of protection. *GetDropBox* also has a utility you can install on desktops and notebooks that allows them to automatically synchronize data between machines and the online storage. This means that you could select a folder on your local machine and have it automatically synchronize with the online storage and any other remote desktop allowing the information to be always up to date.

*Mesh* – <http://www.mesh.com>

Mesh is another application that is available from Microsoft. Once you have downloaded and installed the Mesh utility software on your desktop you can choose to automatically synchronize folders on your machine between each other and with Mesh online storage (only up to 5GB though at the moment). Mesh includes a number of other features including the ability to remote access machines with the Mesh utility software and the ability to play music files directly from the online storage location.

These are by no means the only online storage facilities that are available and each application has its own set of unique features. It is recommended that you check out the features of the most popular and see which suits your needs best. However, they all provide an excellent method for making information available from a single location and improving the speed with which you can access your information.

## *Where to go from here?*

There are plenty of additional ways that you can utilize technology to save you at least an hour a day. In many cases it simply means you need to better appreciate all the functions that can be provided by the product. You can also learn how to improve your own productivity by looking at how other effective people use technology.

Other suggestions include:

- The list of resources that are provided at the end of the document.
- The blog <http://supportweb.ciaops.net.au/blog> also covers many aspects of working more effectively with technology.
- The Computer Information Agency “*Overcoming Email Frustrations with Outlook*” books available at <http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=3557478>
- Additional documents and presentations from the Computer Information Agency at <http://www.slideshare.net/directorcia>

Further documents and information about improving your productivity can be found at <http://www.ciaops.com/>.

If you are interested in receiving information about any upcoming documents please send an email to [director@ciaops.com](mailto:director@ciaops.com) asking to be added to our regular newsletter.

## *Conclusion*

Hopefully this document has been able to provide with at least one way in which you can better utilize technology to give you more time to do what you want to. If it has, then don't let the process stop there. Continue to seek out new ways in which you can be more productive with your time and enhance the quality of your life. The secret is to do it one hour at a time.

If you have any feedback on the information provided here please contact [director@ciaops.com](mailto:director@ciaops.com).

**Computer Information Agency**  
<http://www.ciaops.com>

## Resources

*Infomania: Why we can't afford to ignore it any longer* by Nathan Zeldes, David Sward, and Sigal Louchheim -

<http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/viewArticle/1973/1848>

*Virtues of a second screen* - [http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/20/technology/20basics.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/20/technology/20basics.html?_r=1)

*The Multiple Display Market and Consumer Attitudes* -

<http://www.jonpeddie.com/special/MultDisp.shtml>

*Microsoft desktops* - <http://technet.microsoft.com/en-us/sysinternals/cc817881.aspx>

*Alexis on technology* - <http://www.alexisleon.com/art/2005/07/29/touch-typing.html>

*Typing tutor web* - <http://www.typingweb.com/>

*Advanced Google search help* -

<http://www.google.com/support/websearch/bin/answer.py?hl=en&answer=136861>

*Google Guide* - [http://www.googleguide.com/advanced\\_operators\\_reference.html](http://www.googleguide.com/advanced_operators_reference.html)

*Keyboard shortcuts for Windows* - <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/126449>

*Mac OS 10 keyboard shortcuts* - <http://support.apple.com/kb/HT1343>

*Word keyboard shortcuts* - <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/290938>

*Outlook keyboard shortcuts* - <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook/HP030842231033.aspx>

*Firefox keyboard shortcuts* - <http://support.mozilla.com/en-US/kb/Keyboard+shortcuts>

*Internet Explorer keyboard shortcuts* -

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/products/winfamily/ie/ie7/quickref.msp>

*Telegraph.co.uk* -

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/scienceandtechnology/technology/technologynews/3501938/Email-wastes-an-hour-a-day-study-claims.html>

*Creating an email rule in Outlook* - <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/outlook/HP052428971033.aspx>

*Delicious* - <http://www.delicious.com>

*Social bookmarking in plain English* - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x66IV7GOcNU>

*Free open-source disk encryption software for Windows Vista/XP, Mac OS X, and Linux* -

<http://www.truecrypt.org/>

## *About*

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Robert has a degree in Electrical Engineering as well as Masters of Business Administration. He is also a Small Business Specialist and Microsoft Certified SharePoint Professional. Robert has over 15 years of IT experience in a variety of fields and positions, including working on Wall St in New York. He was the co-founder of Saturn Alliance, an IT systems integration business in Sydney, Australia. He continues his involvement with information technology as the Principal of the Computer Information Agency. Apart from resolving client technical issues, Robert continues to present at seminars and write on a number of topics for the Computer Information Agency. Robert can be contacted via [director@ciaops.com](mailto:director@ciaops.com).

### *Company - Computer Information Agency ( [www.ciaops.com](http://www.ciaops.com) )*

Founded in 1995, the Computer Information Agency is a specialized technology consultancy in Sydney, Australia that focuses on assisting businesses and individuals improve their productivity using technology and smart business practices. The Computer Information Agency has high levels of experience in technologies such as Windows Servers, including Small Business Server, and desktop applications such as Outlook, Word, Excel and OneNote.

With special emphasis placed on the business benefits of technology the Computer Information Agency is unique in its ability to work with companies to improve and streamline their processes utilizing the technology they already have in place. The focus is on providing an improved end result for the business which in the long run leads to greater productivity and profitability. More information about the Computer Information Agency can be found at <http://www.ciaops.com>.

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