

## SIMONE's email feel-good factor

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A computer model called SIMONE, for Simulator for Interruptions and Message Overload in Network Environments described in the latest issue of the *International Journal of Simulation and Process Modelling*, could help solve email overload in busy organizations and companies.

Ashish Gupta at Minnesota State University Moorhead, and Ramesh Sharda at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, describe how SIMONE can produce a model of how email flows within a network of knowledge workers. Gupta explains that the simulation can be used to devise coping mechanisms for controlling information overload and interruptions associated with emails, two common problems faced by managers of knowledge workers.

"Email has become the most prevalent mode of business communication and information exchange within organizations," the researchers say, "and has changed the way we spend our time at work." They point out that it provides a cost-effective and open medium for sharing information and can improve time-effectiveness and efficiency by avoiding the need for many meetings and phone calls.

However, several reports suggest that employees are spending increasing amounts of time handling email, time that may detract from their primary role within the organization. Business researchers have repeatedly raised concerns about email overload, interruptions, technology addiction, attention deficiency and productivity loss.

Gupta and colleagues have carried out an array of tests on email systems

with the help of SIMONE. Their findings suggest the perhaps obvious conclusion that managers could improve email efficiency simply by scheduling email processing times across an organization.

This approach avoids the inherent distraction of continual email interruptions throughout the working day, allowing employees to focus their efforts on primary tasks at other times. The solution also places emphasis on allowing time for necessary email and so removes pressure from employees who feel constantly obliged to check and respond to emails.

More information: "SIMONE: A Simulator for Interruptions and Message Overload in Network Environments" in Int. J. Simulation and Process Modelling, vol 4(3/4), 237-247

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