

# French IT company aspires to be email-free within a year

December 9 2011, By Deborah Netburn

---

How many work emails do you get a day? 80? 200? 500? More than 1,000?

If you are one of the many people who feel overwhelmed by the daily deluge of unnecessary emails in your inbox, consider applying for a job at Atos. The French [information technology services company](#) is hoping to become a zero-email company by 2013.

"We are producing data on a massive scale that is fast polluting our working environments and also encroaching on our personal lives," Thierry Breton, Atos' chairman and chief executive, said in a statement. "At Atos Origin we are taking action now to reverse this trend, just as organizations took measures to reduce [environmental pollution](#) after the [industrial revolution](#)."

[Email](#) pollution? That's one way to look at it.

While the idea of an email-free existence makes the prospect of coming back from a vacation more palatable, it's hard to imagine how a company of Atos' size - 74,000 employees spread out over 42 offices worldwide - can function without email.

In an interview with ABC News, a spokeswoman for Atos said the company was still evaluating solutions, but that the result will probably be a mix of collaborative social [media tools](#) like the Atos Wiki, which enables employees to communicate by contributing or modifying online

content, and the company's online [chat](#) system, which also enables [video conferencing](#) and file sharing.

She added that the company has already reduced internal email 20 percent since it started working toward the zero-email goal six months ago.

Clifford Nass, director of the Communication Between Humans and Interactive Media Lab at Stanford University and author of the book "The Man Who Lied to His Laptop," isn't convinced that Atos has found a good solution to email overload.

"There is no question that the amount of information that is being pressed upon people is more than they can handle," he said. But "the increase of chat is almost certainly a bad thing. There is a lot of evidence that it is more of a hindrance than a help."

Chat, he said, is more distracting than email - if someone wants to chat, they want to chat now - and generally less valuable than email because people tend to type the first thought that comes to mind.

As for the idea of a central document that everyone keeps updating, he said that works only if everyone remembers to check it frequently.

"The real core of this is how often people know what they need to know," he said. "The more people know what they need to know, the more you can have systems with centralized documents and then people know where they can go to find out what they need to know. But when you don't know you need to know something on the document, how will you know to check?"

The issue, he said, is finding the balance between making sure people get information they need to know and not bogging them down with

information they don't need to know.

(c)2011 the Los Angeles Times

Distributed by MCT Information Services

Citation: French IT company aspires to be email-free within a year (2011, December 9) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-12-french-company-aspires-email-free-year.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.