

Simply Brilliant...

By Darren Slade

REMEMBER your first email? The excitement at the little 'ping' as it popped into your inbox?

Fast-forward to 2011 and an ever-increasing chunk of the day is devoted to sifting messages from people you don't know and whose information is of no use.

Dorset's Monica Seeley, founder of the Mesmo Consultancy, is visiting to impart some of the lessons from her book *Brilliant Email*.

She has asked me to save all the emails I received the previous day.

There were only 24 to me personally, but I also dealt with 117 from a shared newsdesk address. Monica has seen inboxes containing 5,000 messages.

Thanks to a ready-reckoning tool on her website, Monica estimates I could save 9.8 days a year by taking better control of my emails.

We start with the emails that could have been eliminated entirely. At least seven of my personal 24 are irrelevant to me. Of the newsdesk emails, 50 per cent are useless.

I'm receiving several unnecessary newsletters. Taking time to click the 'unsubscribe' link at the bottom should pay off.

A number of messages have been duplicated to everyone in the Daily Echo. Monica shows me how to use my email software to create rules which automatically do whatever I want with these – usually deleting them or sending them to a folder.

She spots a 'personal' email from someone I barely know, with a picture attached.

"That would be the classic corporate time waster," she says.

"She could have put it on Facebook or been much more selective about



■ Author of *Brilliant Email*, Dr Monica Seeley gives a master class in managing emails better

who she sent it to."

Then there are the emails sent to several staff at once. Monica suggests we might want to agree to cut down on this sort of thing.

Some messages have large pictures attached and are sent to several people, taking up server space and eating into productivity.

Monica points out that I can sort emails by their file size, then permanently delete the ones that are wasting a lot of space.

And rather than forward pictures within the office, we could be saving them to a shared folder.

A week later, Monica returns to observe that her advice is proving useful – and she takes the opportunity to coach me on not sending unnecessary emails.

She spots me about to reply to

someone with a quick 'thanks'. "No thank-yous – unless they've gone the extra mile or the other person wants it as evidence for their appraisal," she says.

The same applies to requests for receipts. Unless that receipt could be legally significant, don't do it.

Back to my inbox and Monica inspires me to set up a list of sub-folders.

One called 'pendingFriday' (the dot means it goes to the top of the queue) collects all the things I'll deal with that day. Other messages go to folders such as 'keep for reference' and 'awaiting...'

It will take a while to see whether the time I've invested in the clean-up is repaid. But for now, I'm proudly gazing upon that rare thing – an empty inbox.