

# Online Marketing Made Easy <sup>w/</sup> Amy Porterfield



Social Media | List Building | Content Marketing

## The Online Marketing Made Easy Podcast with Amy Porterfield Session #126

Show notes at: <http://www.amyporterfield.com/126>

**Amy Porterfield:** Hey there, Amy Porterfield here. Welcome to another episode of The Online Marketing Made Easy Podcast. Thanks for tuning in. Today we're talking about tackling your inbox.

However, the conversation I'm going to have with my two guests isn't really about the actual emails that have likely been piling up in your inbox for years. Well, if you're anything like me that's happening.

Let me set the stage for you. One of my students, April Perry, sent me an email and said she has gone through my courses and has had great success. She wanted to share some of that success with me. She has created webinars to sell her programs and has done incredibly well. The girl is a go getter.

She has actually built her business with her husband, Eric. The two together are really a dynamic duo. They make working together and being partners in life look really good...like it can actually happen.

They also have four kids and they are busy, busy, busy parents. I love their story in general in terms of being able to create this business together. Their whole goal was to find time to be with their kids. They dramatically changed their business in order to have that freedom.

[April and Eric Perry](#) are a great couple to learn more about. I'll link to their website in my show notes so you can hear their story if you are in a similar situation where you're looking for more time to start your business so you can be with your family. They are a great testament to that.

April reached out to me because she wanted to share some of her great successes. As a course creator that's what you want to hear, how people are using your course and getting amazing success throughout what they're doing. But she offered to come to my house to help me organize my inbox.

She lives in Southern California where I live so it was just a long drive down the highway to come to my place. I thought that was incredibly generous. But she came over and we spent five hours together putting together what she calls a command central.

I'll let her explain to you what a command central is. But what was so interesting with the time I had with April was that forever we didn't work on my inbox. It was hours before we even got over to Gmail. I thought that was incredibly weird but when she started to explain to me what a command central is really all about and how important that is to get to inbox zero it all made sense.

I decided I needed to have April on the show to talk to my audience about what this looks like just to kind of start planting the seed that it is really possible to tame the inbox. I actually never believed it was possible.

I am happy to say I am at inbox zero every single day. That's kind of crazy, right? In addition to that I now have a better system for [Asana](#), a better system for Evernote, and just a better system in general for the errands I have to run, the things I need to do with Cade, the discussions I need to have with friends or family members or things to just kind of keep everything running and humming on all cylinders.

She is going to talk about that as well because as entrepreneurs we all know that business and the personal stuff can easily collide, especially when you work from home. She doesn't ignore the fact that you have a personal life as you are trying to run your business and that's included in the command central and that's really cool.

I will tell you that I have had so much relief from putting this together with April. I'm way more productive and efficient. More importantly, the space in my mind has freed up considerably because April taught me that all of my tasks related to projects need to go into Asana and any emails related to it needed to move over quickly so I could address them and put them in a special folder and come back to them when needed.

Now I never wonder what I'm forgetting. All I say to myself is, "It's in Asana" or "It's filed correctly in your inbox to go back to when needed."

That's a really good feeling. I know so many different people talk about inbox zero but I do think April and her husband, Eric, have put something pretty unique together that is very, very easy to follow but is also incredibly powerful.

I've invited April and Eric Perry to come on the show and share with us exactly what it means to set up a command central and then we'll get into the emails. We will talk about how to organize your inbox, where emails should go, how to approach it everyday, and the rules to follow so this continues to happen. We'll get into all of that.

I won't make you wait any longer. I want to introduce you to April and Eric Perry.

**Amy:** April and Eric, thank you so much for being here. I really appreciate it.

**April:** We're so excited. Thanks so much Amy.

**Eric:** Yeah, it's a pleasure to be with you.

**Amy:** It's so great to have both of you on. I love when we can do a husband and wife team because it makes it a little bit more interesting. It's a lot

more fun, for sure. I know both of you have a lot to offer into this conversation.

Before we get going, can you kind of set me up in terms of what a command central is without getting into all the details yet. We'll get there. Why a command central? Why is it so important?

**April:** I found that in my life growing up we worked from piles. I had piles of paper on my kitchen counter. My mom had piles on her dresser. We had piles in our bedroom. We would cover our piles with blankets when guests would come over so that we wouldn't be embarrassed.

As I trained people all over the world we have found this isn't uncommon. Most people live with piles everywhere, especially when you're working from a desk and when you're working with digital files. Those count as piles too.

Instead, a command central is a seamless system in your home or office that keeps track of every project, paper, task, email. I kind of compare it to something like a filter in a swimming pool. If you don't have the filter on your pool is going to get full of leaves and dirt.

If you don't have a command central your life is full of clutter and chaos. But when you get that filter working or when you build your command central all of the sudden that's what churns through everything on your plate and you are able to create peace and actually wake up excited every morning to tackle your task list.

**Amy:** That is so amazing. It is an amazing feeling overall. I already had an a-ha moment and we're only a few minutes in. I realized that since you came to my house and we worked together I haven't had even one post-it note floating around my desk.

I could say there have probably been 20 and at the end of the week they are all over. But I haven't even had one. If any of you guys listening have a post-it note addiction, what we are going to teach you here is definitely going to eliminate at least that, if not all the other piles I have definitely had as well.

Let's jump into it. Talk to me about this command central and, specifically, I'm going to walk through what I know it includes and then if you guys could basically fill us in in terms of why one thing is important and how it fits into the puzzle. Good?

**April:** Right?

**Amy:** Okay, great. The first thing in the command central is a monthly calendar for appointments. Talk to us about that.

**April:** Most people have some sort of calendar in place. I always used a paper planner and Eric went digital. We then realized we really needed to come together. We have a shared Google calendar. A lot of people do that when it comes to appointments and things like that.

What typically happens is that most people will clutter their calendars with tasks or projects or things that don't really have to be done. Then you spend all of your time moving appointments from place to place and moving tasks around and spending more time juggling the calendar than actually working by the calendar.

We want to have a super streamlined calendar with only the appointments on it that we are absolutely committed to keep. If you have a dentist's appointment, a webinar, something you have to do, that's on your calendar. Everything else is going to go elsewhere.

We want buffer, we want white space, we want flexibility. If you were to wake up in the morning with the stomach flu you would only have a couple of things to cancel and then you could relax the rest of the day.

**Eric:** This type of discipline actually helps you decide which of your appointments are really the most relevant, the most urgent, or the most essential. It really forces you to make decisions as to what you don't need to do or want to do that day to keep that white space or the buffer.

**Amy:** Fantastic. That's the monthly calendar. Number 2 is a To-Do Today calendar for date specific tasks. Talk to me about that.

**April:** When you have a monthly calendar to set up your big appointments and things like that you also need a place to write down tasks that are flexible but that need to get done that day but could be done morning, noon, or night.

If you try to block all of those into your calendar, I know a lot of people try to do that, but suppose you have to pay your health insurance bill on Thursday and you put it on your calendar to do it at 10 a.m. but you have a toddler throwing a tantrum or an emergency meeting comes up. Something always comes up.

**Amy:** Always.

**April:** Then you know you don't really have to pay that bill at 10 a.m. so you move it or you miss it because it's somewhere on your appointment calendar.

**Amy:** I missed it all the time when I did that.

**April:** Then you question what you are doing. Instead you want to have a place to put calendar-specific events. If you're using a paper system, most paper planners have a task list for that day. I would put it there.

You and I set up Asana for you and I use Asana for all of my computer tasks. You can easily set a date and have something that is date specific. This is the only thing you want date specific in your whole system. You want the calendar that has your monthly tasks and appointments and things like that. And then you want day-specific tasks.

**Amy:** Perfect. I use Asana, for sure. I also have a little backup and I still use a paper planner. I haven't been able to give up my planner pad. I love it.

**Eric:** Amy, you're not alone.

**Amy:** Okay, good. But since working with April I have noticed the planner pad is almost a little security blanket for me. I like to map things out, write a bunch of notes, and figure out my day. But once I've done that and pretty much move it into Asana in my digital calendar then I'm off to the races.

That paper planner becomes a lot less important to me once I have things in Asana and into my calendar.

**Eric:** To both of your credit on that paper planner piece, I think you will agree this is the place you are actually the most creative. Your mind starts to open up and you can freely start to design, sketch, and dream a little bit. But then the notes are captured as you move more into a digital solution to communicate with team members or others you are coordinating with.

**Amy:** For sure.

**April:** There are two common mistakes that we make with a specific task list. Do you want to hear them?

**Amy:** Yes, please.

**April:** The first mistake is to put projects on our to-do list. I would put something like “testimonials” on today’s task list. To me that means I need testimonials on my site. I listened to your podcast recently and now feel like I need more testimonials.

When you write “testimonials” down as a task that’s not a task. It’s a full project.

**Eric:** It’s the same thing as putting landscape the backyard on your to-do list for that day. That is just not going to happen. It is a multi-step project but you are going to keep moving that from day to day to day on your to-do list feeling overwhelmed.

**April:** They feel overwhelmed.

**Eric:** Disappointed. You feel like you are not very good at your to-do list. But it is a project, not a task.

**April:** Instead, what you do is only put next actions on your task list. This term was coined by David Allen, I believe, but next action is the next specific visible activity that will move your project toward completion.

It might be something like “email my top ten community members and ask for a testimonial about my course.” I could actually do that in 15 minutes or so. Or it might be “edit the testimonials I’ve gathered in the Google doc.” That’s a next action. But you don’t want to put projects on there.

That was common mistake #1; #2 is that sometimes on our task list we write down everything we wish we could do today instead of the specific things that must be done. I started doing this in high school. I had my first planner when I was 13. I love my planners.

**Amy:** Okay, time out. Time out. We have to say something really fast.



**Eric:** I see a story coming on.

**Amy:** Yes, that reminded me. We have a little segue real fast and we will get back to this mistake #2. But you have to tell people what you told me and what you showed me when you came to my house. This was hysterical to me.

**Eric:** First off, what senior student or high school student ditches one of their days of high school to go to an organization or productivity type seminar.

**Amy:** Exactly.

**Eric:** Who does that?

**April:** Okay, okay. What happened, I was a senior in high school. Franklin Quest (it was called at that time) came to our city and did a full-day seminar. You brought your planner and did full training.

I ditched school and went to the training. I'm there with all of these business people and Tony Robbins is sitting right behind me. I showed Amy a picture of me and Tony together. I had his tape, Awaken the Giant Within, a cassette tape.

**Eric:** You were what, 17 or 18?

**April:** I was 17 and he and I are standing there. I have my planner in my hand.

**Amy:** Yes, you are very proud with the planner in your hand.

**Eric:** So both of you were there learning to be more productive together.

**Amy:** Exactly. He's a huge fan of this type of planning. He's really organized so I'm cracking up that you were 17 years old and there you are sitting in this training with Tony Robbins.

**April:** The thing is I loved it.

**Eric:** You may have to put that photo on the show notes.

**Amy:** I think so.

**April:** How funny. I loved that. But the thing was, here's what I found out about my planner. I was really good at calendaring, I was really good at getting all my homework done, I used my planner for everything. But my problem was that I would write down on my task list probably 35 things to do every day.

I would add arrows and forward them all to the next day, the next day, and the next day. I didn't know how else to work. That just left me feeling like I was failing everyday and no one likes that feeling, right?

**Amy:** Right.

**April:** Instead of writing everything you wish to do today, you are only writing the things that have to be done that day. By the time you're finished putting your calendar together you should have maybe a couple of appointments that day and a few things that have to be done that day.

Again, buffer, open white space, flexibility. We will fill that in with the other stuff.

**Amy:** Yes.

**April:** We want this to be streamlined.

**Amy:** This was a big one for me. We'll move on to the next one in a quick second, but I have to chime in here and say that now I finally do two to three tasks a day. I feel so accomplished by the end of the day.

Before I started working with April and Eric I felt like I was a big loser at the end of the day because I didn't get anything done. That wasn't true. Although, I will say when I had 10 to 15 things on my list I sometimes didn't really get anything done because I would look at the list in the morning and know that I couldn't even deal with it.

I would totally check out.

**Eric:** You bring up a good point. It is the idea of thinking our success is equated to a long list in front of us and working really hard at being busy at that list as opposed to focusing on the three or four most essential things that needed to be done that day and measuring success by results achieved.

What were you able to accomplish? What did you move forward? Even if that's only three or four things, because you may have only gotten three or four things done out of a list of 30, but you get to cross all three or four on your list and be 100% complete as opposed to 10% completion from the bigger list.

Then you waste time rewriting those items on your list for the next day and are feeling discouraged and depressed.

**Amy:** It really comes down to mindset and how you feel at the end of the day. It is actually going to make a huge impact in how creative you are and how inspired you are to keep moving forward. This is a big one.

Let's move on to the third one. You are saying not to put projects on the to-do today planner that you have going on whether it is Asana or a paper planner or whatever it is.

The third one is a current project list, your top three to five projects that you are focused on in your business right now.

**April:** Right. Most of us are working on 20 to 100 projects at the same time. A project is just a multi-step task. That could be anything from getting passports to getting Facebook ads set up to updating slides for a webinar.

You can honestly have 20 to 100 projects without even having to think about it. But what happens when you ask most people how they are feeling about their life right now they feel they are putting out fires all day, they are running around, they are never getting anything done, and on the webinars we do we do a little survey to ask how many meltdowns they have had in the past seven days. The answer is that 90% have always had at least one.

**Amy:** Wow.

**April:** Of course, that is a self-selecting group that is coming to a productivity seminar so you have to kind of consider that. But if we can simplify our list to three to five projects that you are focusing on this month then you are going to be working toward getting those done.

The question always comes, “What do I do with the other 400 projects that I want to do?” You put them on a next in line list. You’ve got a super simple specific list of what you are working on and your focus.

If something comes along that is more important or urgent and you have to do it first, fine. You can put it on your current projects list but you have to knock another one off. You’re not going to keep letting this grow.

**Eric:** A quick analogy. I know I am usually speaking to females in most of the classes we’re doing but I think this is an analogy that both females and

males would appreciate. When you have 100 to 200 projects on your list at a time, let's say it's only 20, it's overwhelming and you're not really making much progress.

I liken it to every one of your projects is a football. Let's say it's on the 20-yard line. If you can only advance that ball with one play at a time but you have to move ball to ball to ball, does that make sense? You take a play and move one ball forward five yards and then move another ball two yards, if you're working on 20 balls at a time they are making very slow progress.

If you have three to five, we recommend that the upper limit be about seven to eight projects at any one time...

**April:** That includes family and personal. That's not just work.

**Eric:** Yes, family, personal, and business projects balanced out. Seven or eight is the maximum. People are saying they have a whole bunch of others. Trust us. Focus on these seven or eight. Get them across the goal line this month and then come back and get the next seven or eight.

You will score a lot more touchdowns and you will get a lot more projects completely done and producing what you want them to produce. We are working on this on more of a limited scoped basis than if you try to take on the 20 or 30 at a time concurrently.

**Amy:** I can get behind that. That definitely makes sense. I think that leads us into the fourth piece of the puzzle. I think this is going to account for some of those projects that you really want to put on the list but you shouldn't put them on your top three to five.

It is a context-based next actions list. I might be getting confused, but what if you have a project you really want to put on the list but it's just not now, you can't put it there.

**April:** Okay, that's going to go on a next in-line list for your current project.

**Eric:** Like a future project.

**April:** For example, I was showing people how you can do this within Asana. Let's say you have a list that you set up, Asana calls it a project. It would say, "Here are Amy's current projects."

You can have a section called, "Here's my current projects," then you can have another section of "My next in line projects." You can look at the sheet and see that you are doing three this week and everything else is waiting down below.

Then the context-based next actions list will help support the projects you are working on now.

**Amy:** Okay, got ya. Just to clarify for everybody, a current project list (the top three to five projects you are working on) can also add another line item with the next in line stuff. But the fourth piece of the puzzle here is different than all of that. It's a context-based next action list for a lot of different things. Talk to me about this.

**April:** Another common mistake that I made when I just used my regular planner is that on my list of 30 things I wanted to do that day were a jumble of context. Some things needed to be done at school, some at home, some were phone calls, some were errands, some were agenda items and things I couldn't do alone (I actually had to talk with another person about them).

When you have all of those context jumbled you spend a lot of time looking at your list and trying to dissect it in the moment. Let's say you are out running errands and you actually have three errands on that list but

one is at the top, one is at the bottom and one is at the middle. You kind of forget a couple of them.

That's what we want to prevent. Instead, you have one list. I use paper for everything other than computer. I have a paper list for home, phone, errands, and to discuss. I have paper for that.

**Amy:** Those are her categories, guys. She has a list for what she needs to do at home, what phone calls she needs to make, what errands she needs to run, and things she needs to discuss with different people. Then the last one is computer. What does that mean, computer?

**April:** Those are things you are going to do while you are on the computer. I keep those in Asana because I have so many.

**Amy:** Give me an example of a few of those.

**April:** It is anything from putting the new images for our new program, to typing up testimonials, to fixing the affiliate link. It's all of those different tasks that need to be done on the computer. It wouldn't make sense for me to put those all on a paper list in my planner because I'm just going through them so quickly. They are typically just on the computer.

When you have the next-actions list put together, it could all be done if someone isn't working on a computer a lot I would certainly just have it in one list, but now you have the paper or digital list that's going to organize things by context.

This is how it's so awesome. Let's say your kids are all at school and you sit down at the computer. You aren't wondering what you should do. You don't just go get on social media. You are thinking you have a computer list so you look to see what's next in line. You will then spend 10 minutes on one item, 15 minutes on the next, and you are knocking it out of the park.

You then go pick up your child from piano lessons and while you are out you see that you need to drop off a book, pick up the dry cleaning, and all of that stuff. You group your errands so you're not wasting time or money on gas.

When Eric and I sit down. Let's say we're busy for a whole week and we don't have a ton of time to talk. When we do finally have time to sit down and we're in a good talking mood we have our "to discuss" list where we can just say, "I needed to ask you about family pictures, I needed to ask you about this person we might be bringing on..."

**Eric:** For some reason, her to-discuss list is always way longer than mine. I don't understand why.

**Amy:** Isn't that funny how that works, Eric? I can think of ten things I could tell Hobie right now that we need to talk about. He could probably think of one. Yeah, I'm with you there.

I don't want to overcomplicate this because we've got some really good stuff still to cover. But I want to ask questions I think my audience might be thinking right now. I know on your webinar (I'll tell people how to get on your free webinar if they are liking this and want to dive in deeper) tell me how your to-do today list that you've created in Asana of three to five things is different than the context-based next-action list?

**April:** Great question. When you look at your to-do today list, all of those things, which should be just a few (two or three), are all going to be done before you go to bed tonight. They have to be done for sure.

The next actions list organized by contexts of home, phone, errands, to discuss, and computer are options. Those are for the whole week. At the beginning of the week you can put together the next actions list and they are just options.



You know you should get your boy's hair cut sometime this week so you stick it on your errands list. Some day this week you need to actually give a person a phone call so you put it on your phone call list. If you got a weird bill in the mail and the insurance processed it wrong so you need to call the insurance company. You can stick it on your phone call list but it doesn't have to be done Monday or Tuesday.

Let's say the three things in Asana that you have to do today are all computer tasks. If you are out running errands because you needed groceries and needed to do a couple of things, you won't be working on those have-to-do today items because you are out running errands.

As long as you are out you might as well look at your week options list (the choices) and run those errands as long as you are there. When you get home you dive right back into the things you have to do.

**Amy:** Got ya. What I think with this context-based next-actions list is that this is what's eliminating a lot of the post-it notes. Coming back to my post-it note junkies, I know I have a lot of them here, this is how you eliminate it. You put it in categories.

This is something I've just gotten used to using on a regular basis. That's why I wanted April to clarify that because I was confused about that in the beginning. Now it is way more clear to me now that I've done it. But once you sit down and start doing this stuff it all makes sense.

**Eric:** If I can just backtrack just for a minute or two to be sure everyone is on board, when I first learned about this stuff the way April was doing it, it was new to me. Just to give a framework of how these three different lists connect together, we talked about the whole idea of getting all of your projects written down somewhere.

These are all of your future projects. We have found that it is helpful to grab a couple of sheets of paper, a digital note app, or whatever you want and just get all of the projects out of your head and written down somewhere. These are the 100 to 200 to 300 projects that are out there.

It is going to feel a little overwhelming at first to a lot of people. We've been building these lists and projects that we mean to eventually get to some day. They have been being built for years and decades.

**April:** They are sitting in your head.

**Eric:** You will have literally about 300 projects, multi-step projects. You will look at that list and feel a little overwhelmed at first. But then something cool is going to happen. You are going to relax because you will realize for the first time in your life that all of the projects that have been swirling around in your head are written down and recorded somewhere. You're not going to forget them.

That's where you start. You take that and say, "This month, what are the three to five or seven to eight projects I want to make current projects that I am working on and advancing and getting across the finish line this month?"

Once I have my seven or eight projects I will just take a quick moment and brainstorm under a heading for each the different action steps that I think need to happen. This is where your next actions are going to come from.

I kind of compare those seven or eight current projects I picked for the month to Pez dispensers. That might sound crazy, but everyone can relate to a Pez dispenser. Each project is its own Pez dispenser.

When you figure out what the truly next actions are to get that project done it's like loading the grape, the lemon, the strawberry candy into the Pez dispenser and then you take one or two of those pieces of candy from

each project and those are the next actions you are going to work on in this context-based list.

You are just going to take one or two at a time and put it in its appropriate context. Then as you go through your day you're knocking stuff out. But as you are knocking it out it ties back to the different projects you have said are important to that month.

That's the way it is almost a seamless way to get seven or eight projects across the goal line each month and then the next month be able to come to that master list of 300 and pick your next seven to eight.

Our promise to people is that over the course of a year or two that master list disappears and all of the projects you pick are the ones that mean the most to you, the things you really want to work on and focus on as opposed to the things that are niggling and weighing on you for years.

**Amy:** Niggling. Is that a word in the dictionary.

**Eric:** I think it is. I'll look it up and let you know for sure but I think it is.

**Amy:** Please do. I love overall what I think this does. It gives you some breathing room and white space in your head where everything used to feel so jumbled. Like you said just a second ago, you get really clear on what matters. It takes a little while to start clearing through some of the clutter but it becomes very clear what the priorities are and what matters most to you.

I'm so glad you kind of explained that a little bit more in depth so people really understand the importance here.

**April:** I know it probably seems weird that this has anything to do with email. Until you have...

**Amy:** We're getting there.

**April:** Until you have a system set the emails are going to just go everywhere.

**Amy:** In the intro I said I didn't understand why you were taking so long to get into my inbox when you came to my house. It was like, "Wait a second, we're wasting a lot of time lady. I've got thousands of emails that we need to talk about."

That was such a tiny piece once I had my command central all set up. I'm really glad we went through this but I definitely mentioned that in the intro just to warn people this would be a little different than they thought. We're setting the foundation first, which I love.

**Eric:** Absolutely.

**Amy:** I know to make this all work you have a few rules to follow when it does come to emails. When you finally get to the point that we are going to tackle the inbox, once you've got that in place there are some rules we have to follow.

I definitely follow these rules. Will you kind of go through them with us? There are three of them that really stick with me.

**April:** The first rule is to only check your email at designated times throughout the day.

**Amy:** That's so hard.

**April:** You want to think of it like you don't just sit there with your email box open and any time email comes you just jump at it and do whatever it asks you to do. That's a surefire recipe for feeling tired at the end of the day.

**Eric:** I think over the past one or two decades we have been trained in a corporate setting to always be accessible, always on, always responsive. It is developing the essential mindset that you are only going to do it a couple of times a day. Like Amy said, it's so hard.

**April:** It is hard. But, there are a lot of different ways you can do this. David Allen suggests you think of email checking as your commute to work and your commute home from work. You are kind of going to get into your email a little bit.

Some people say not to check it at all until noon. Whatever works for you is great. If you at least have some sort of rule or use something like Inbox Pause or totally just shutting down your email. This is a simple strategy. If you can figure out how to discipline yourself with this or have the emails only delivered to your inbox every few hours (Inbox Pause can do that with Gmail) that's something that's super helpful.

When you do check your email you are going to process everything in the inbox and leave nothing there. I used to open an email and read it and decide I needed to do something with it. I would then leave it in my inbox.

I would go to my next email and see that I needed to do something with it too and would decide to get back with it later. Then at the end are a whole bunch of emails, some marked read and some marked unread. There are things buried.

One time when I finally cleaned out my inbox I found an email from a dear friend that was a year old. She had written me a beautiful letter and it was a whole year before I got back to her. The great part is that I finally emailed her back and she never emailed me back. I still haven't gotten in touch with her.

The thing is, we want to now process this. We are going to talk about how you process it using what we just established with command central. That's going to make a big difference. Just knowing when you open it you are processing. Nothing is staying in the inbox.

The third rule is that we are going to use a two-minute rule. This is something you have probably heard before. If you can just respond to it, answer it, take care of it in two minutes or less you just do it, you don't wait for it.

Typically, when I open my inbox (right now I am sure I have probably 40 emails that have come in over the last couple of hours because I haven't been online) I am going to go through each one, handle whatever I can, and then we will talk more about what we do with the rest that you can't handle right than.

The two-minute rule is huge.

**Amy:** That's a big one for me. I loved that. I loved all of these rules. I'm a rules kind of girl so give me some rules. If I believe in them I can definitely follow them. They have made a huge difference. I can't even believe I can say I'm still at inbox zero all this time later. I actually thought you were crazy when you said it would happen.

One thing we're not going to get into in detail, basically we went into my inbox and I archived a bunch of things. I didn't go through every single thing. I archived a bunch of things and that definitely helped me get through it a lot faster.

**April:** We'll talk about that when we talk about the folders. They are going to want three folders to start with but we will get to that.

**Amy:** Let's just jump into it. Talk to me about these three folders.

**April:** Some people use tons of folders. There are a lot of different ways to do this and I have actually taught this different ways in the past. When I came and worked with you and as I have been working with other business professionals I found that these three folders are the minimum.

**Amy:** We are talking about folders inside your email inbox.

**April:** Right. If you are doing Yahoo or Hotmail or something like that you can create folders. If you are using Gmail they call them Labels. It is the same thing. It is an ability to give it a name and have it out of your inbox.

There are three folders we suggest. I call one of them @ImmediateAction. That means these emails will take longer than two minutes. I can't do it right now but does it make sense to extract the task and put it into Asana or into a next actions list?

I just need to get to it probably sometime today or at least by the end of the week have the immediate action folder at zero. I zero mine out every week but this is the one folder that before I go to bed each night I check it to make sure everything that really needed my attention was done. Does that sound good?

**Amy:** Yes.

**April:** The second folder is @Tickler. The tickler file that is described in David Allen's book, [Getting Things Done](#), is actually 43 folders. It was 1-31 to count for the days of the month and then 12 folders for the months. You would actually mail yourself things you wanted to do. If you wanted something done February 28 you would stick it in the February 28<sup>th</sup> folder and it would come to you and your assistant would put it on your desk.

Now that we don't have paper as much and we are working much more from email and digital files, a tickler folder is just where you are going to

put any task-specific or calendar-specific email where the task itself or the event itself is already in your system and on your calendar or task list.

You may want to reference it. You can think of the tickler folder as a reference folder. I'll give you some examples in a minute. They could be things like if you have registered for a webinar. They send you an email that has your login link. Where do you put that?

You usually leave it there because you are going to need it in a few days. Or, you file it. But if you stick it in @Tickler and make sure the webinar is on your calendar, when the time comes if you need the link you can just go find it. Does that sound good?

**Amy:** That sounds good.

**April:** The third one is called @ToSort. I love this because as you are processing your inbox you are going to go through and process probably the last 30 days worth. I think that's what you and I did together.

We went through your email, or at least scanned through the past 30 days. If you didn't want to open each one individually you at least scanned it and checked to make sure nothing really needed your attention. Then all of the other thousands of emails were just moved to sort.

For your mind this says, "These are the emails I haven't yet processed. They are in a safe place but I will probably never see them again." Or, you could just search them if they are needed.

When I did mine I put about 3,600 emails into an @ToSort file. I have never had to go back to it. I can open it right now and look at it but it is nothing that I really needed. That is going to clear your inbox out. If you haven't needed it in the past 30 days chances are...



**Eric:** Only when she had this system and did this about three years ago, that was the biggest thing I was struggling with. If someone hasn't contacted you or if something hasn't happened with the emails that are 31 days or more, it is probably not going to be necessary.

They will probably email you again if it is really urgent. With this process she uses, I had about 10,000 that I moved into my @ToSort folder.

**Amy:** Wow.

**April:** Yeah.

**Eric:** She has helped people with up to six digits of emails.

**April:** We have a contest, how many emails?

**Eric:** What's the high number on the list? No one is judging you. It is amazing. People are trying to work on a daily basis and are pounding through an email account that is showing you 30, 40, or 50,000 emails. Again, those are all weighing on your mind.

When you can get those out and you can have an open space in your inbox you know you can work on those ten things and move a couple to immediate action and a couple to reference. Then you are done.

**Amy:** Now that you went over the different folders, can you give me some examples of emails and how you would sort them?

**April:** Absolutely. Let's start with a really simple one. Let's say you get an email from a potential affiliate. They tell you they are really interested in your program and they would really like to promote it. This is an affiliate you would love to work with.

You need to get that person set up with access to your program. Let's say you want to write a really thoughtful email in response. This is going to take more than two minutes because you have to figure it out and get it all set up.

You could put that email into your @ImmediateAction folder. Maybe the entire thing will take five to six minutes. It's not a big enough task that you need to put it as a project or into Asana or add it to one of your lists. But you don't want it sitting in your inbox as your reminder.

You just put it into @ImmediateAction. You are going to try to get through it during the day, especially towards the end of the day as you are cleaning up your emails. But if worse comes to worst, by the end of the week, your immediate action folder will be at zero so you will get to it for sure within a week and your mind can rest.

Number 2 happens when a client sends you an email with a bunch of information that he wants to discuss when you meet. He then says he wants you to call him on Friday at 3 p.m. If you have an email like this you usually think you should just leave it in your email inbox and you will remember to call him on Friday because you will be looking at your email inbox.

What typically happens is your email box turns into a super long task list and that email will be sitting there all week looking at you and you are going to have to keep thinking about it over and over again.

So you just go to your calendar. You are going to say, "Call @ 3 p.m." You might reference the email. I usually put a little (t) if I am on a digital calendar. That means it is in my tickler. I just move the email to my tickler and sometimes even put the date of the email or the name of the person or the subject line.

What I want to happen is when I get on my calendar and it's 3 o'clock on Friday I make the phone call and then I see there is a (t). I immediately just open the tickler file on my email and the whole thing is right there. I am never searching, I'm not losing it, and you are sharp and on the ball.

**Amy:** I like that. I definitely use that one. I like it a lot.

**April:** Alright. Sort rule three is when you see an email coming through that is asking for a guest post to a site you adore. You don't want to miss it and definitely want to submit a guest post. Again, this is one of those things you would leave in your email inbox because you don't want to forget about it.

You really don't need to be looking at it all the time. Instead, you think about when you would actually want to send the post in or at least when you might think about it and plan it. Let's say you think you could do it next Wednesday after you have some project work done.

If you will have a little more breathing space on Wednesday you could just go into Asana and start planning the guest post submission and put the date that will trigger on Wednesday. Then you can reference the tickler (t) and put the email into the tickler.

The email is now out of your inbox. It is ready and next Wednesday when you are actually brainstorming the guest post you can just pull it up and see any parameters or whatever was included. Does that make sense?

**Amy:** Yep.

**April:** Number four, let's say you get an email from a friend saying she just switched to [SamCart](#). We actually just did that on your recommendation.

**Amy:** Isn't it fantastic?

**April:** Oh my gosh, I love it.

**Amy:** I love SamCart too.

**April:** Let's say you just heard me and Amy talking about how much we love SamCart. You are really excited and you think you should actually upgrade because you are losing all kinds of sales. Your shopping cart isn't working and you really need help. Let's say you decide you want that to be one of your current projects.

You could just take that and put it on your current projects list. Again, if you already have seven or eight projects you have to bump one of them off onto the next-in-line list. This is going to be a priority because it's directly related to your sales. It will help you right away.

That email that came from your friend can be deleted or archived because you don't need to reference it again. You now have this on your current projects list and you are going to be reviewing it during your weekly review and you will be moving this forward. Does that sound good?

**Amy:** Yep.

**April:** Just a final one, let's say you have hired someone to manage your Facebook ads and he asks you to call him when you have a second this week. It is one of those phone calls you know you need to make but it's not really urgent and things are actually going pretty well with the ads.

You just need to call sometime this week when you have time so you can just go ahead and put that on your phone calls list of your next actions. It is in the context-based next actions. Then you can delete or archive the email because now during that week when you are making phone calls you will see the note to call.

Let's say you really want to be sure you call by Thursday. Maybe you are going out of town Friday or there is a conference coming up or something like that. On your calendar for Thursday you can make a little trigger or reminder that says, "Have I called my Facebook ads guy yet?"

That just reminds you. Things on your next actions list, the context-based list are not calendar specific so they are nothing you have to stress or worry about. But if you know every single day you are waking up and looking at your calendar or keeping up with what's on your calendar then having a calendar trigger enables your mind to rest.

That's really the whole goal. For every single email and task you need to be able to determine when you are going to review it, when you are going to do it, and you want to feel really confident that nothing is going to slip through the cracks.

**Amy:** Oh my gosh! That is so good. I love this.

**Eric:** She's like an email ninja. I hope someday to become as good at email ninjary as she is.

**Amy:** Me too.

**Eric:** It is fun to watch her because, literally, she is processing through a lot of emails every day as I am sure you are, but to be able to say that we can get to email zero and our minds can be clear. one of my favorite things she mentions in one of our classes is that she wants to be able to go to bed content and wake up excited.

When you feel like you have so many things hanging over you it is hard to wake up excited. But when you know that you are going to wake up and review just a couple of lists and a calendar quickly to see what has to be done that day it takes a lot of the stress off. She is quite a ninja at this stuff.

**Amy:** She really is. One thing I noticed as we went through the podcast episode, this stuff is so important and so very good, but I feel it is even easier to follow and dive into deeper on a webinar. That's why I was excited when I asked you guys to come on.

You also have a webinar. I want people to see it and really get into it and realize how they can process it in their own business. I am partial, but webinars kind of bring this all to life. I know you guys have an amazing training on this so tell me all about it.

**April:** It's called [Four Unbelievably Simple Steps to Double Your Productivity](#). The idea is that you are going to come in workshop style because something most likely feels overwhelming in your life. If you are procrastinating anything it is probably because you haven't set up that current projects list or you haven't identified the next actions or want to learn how to create context-based to-do lists and learn how to work from this framework everyday.

We make it really visual for you. We are actually showing you examples and talking about how you would set up your system, how you would solve these problems you are having. Maybe you want to spend more time with your family. Maybe you want to stop being in your email all day.

Maybe you are procrastinating building your business or launching your podcast or whatever it is you are doing because it just feels big to you. What is exciting is that when we have people come onto our class we then get to actually talk about how they are going to do it with their specific project and you get to feel the momentum of the group.

We walk you through how it actually looks by showing you photos of our system, photos of what other people's lists look like. I think it is super helpful. You can talk about it on a podcast. It is kind of hard to explain

everything on a podcast. But when you can actually see a list and see how people are doing it you think it's not that hard.

All of the sudden it feels totally doable.

**Eric:** One of our requirements in the webinar is that you actually have to come in willing to have a really good time. We actually make this fun. If you're not like April where organizing and productivity is your passion...

**April:** If you never ditched school...

**Eric:** We come in and we actually have it where it is very much workshop based. It is hands on. We tell a number of stories and just connect with our community there that comes into each webinar. It is a lot of fun. We actually want to make it engaging, interactive, and fun.

Like April said, the most valuable part is when you get to step back and realize that as we build this system we aren't becoming more productive for productivity's sake, we are becoming more productive so that the things that have to be done to keep our lives and homes and work in order can be done more effectively and in less time so that it frees up more time and space and margin in our lives to really focus on the projects or causes and missions and purposes that we really feel we want to devote time to.

To me the very favorite part of the webinars each time we do them is to connect with these people on a one-to-one level in the text chat and with the community that's online during that hour and really hear that if they had more margin and space and have a chance right there on the call to think about it, what would they do?

You can just start seeing people's dreams and hopes and ideas kind of come out. That's the part that's fun, to see their stories and then follow-up with them in the weeks and months ahead to hear what's really happening in their lives in those veins.

**April:** I think it's really helpful just to know you're not alone if you feel overwhelmed everyday or if you feel you are juggling too many balls or feel you are not able to move forward on the things that matter to you.

Being an entrepreneur or build a business online has a lot of components and it can easily feel overwhelming. Eric and I work here from home. We've got our four kids. We're juggling a whole lot of activities. But we have found this process that explain is really replicable. It is totally doable. You can get yourself set up.

The whole system, getting it up and running, can be done in a couple of weeks. If I come to someone's home it can be done in a few hours or a couple of days if we are diving into everything. But it's really exciting.

I think you have the url set up at <http://www.amyporterfield.com/step>.

**Amy:** It's at <http://www.amyporterfield.com/step> and guys it's totally worth it. This is the stuff that matters most if you want to get more creative and more inspired in your business and you want more time for the fun things that you love to work on. Let's get the foundation set up. Let's get the command central set up and then you, my friend, are off to the races.

That's why I wanted to share this with you. I've had a personal impact from April and Eric. I love everything I've learned from them and I would love for you to learn from them as well.

Guys, thank you so very much for being here. It's always a pleasure to chat with you. I'm so glad I got to introduce you to my audience.

**April:** Thanks, Amy. It was wonderful.

**Eric:** Thanks a lot. It's been wonderful to get to know you and them as well. Thanks for the time.



**Amy:** Thanks again. Take care.

There you have it. I hope you enjoyed this mini training as much as I have. April and Eric are just so delightful to talk to and learn from so definitely, if you are curious about getting your command central in order go check out their training. It is really worth your time.

Thank you so very much for being here with me. I cannot wait to jump on the podcast next week with you as well. I hope you have an amazing week and I'll see you again soon. Bye for now.

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