

# Tackle the Overload of Information

*By Richelle McFate*

I am a note taking junkie. Or maybe I'm just forgetful. Either way, I have reminders everywhere. There are notes stuck on my refrigerator and microwave at home, a million scraps and napkin pieces with notes in my purse, and stickies all around my computer monitor. These little pieces of paper work fine at home, but in the office, I've found I need to stay better organized if I want any hope of providing fast and efficient service when I get a call at the Help Desk. The faster I can find a piece of information, the better.

I have tried many different techniques from creating Word documents to using the Desktop Sticky Notes feature in Windows®, but over the years I've honed in on what works best for me. I have found I like using Posts™ in Outlook™.

If you use Outlook as your email program, you already know it shines when it comes to storing, organizing and searching for information. These features make it perfect for creating an information store for all my notes on... well, everything.

As far back as Outlook 2003, it was

possible to create "Posts" in a folder. Posts are not really emails or documents, nor are they sticky notes, but rather, they are some combination of the three. Posts differ from the Notes feature in Outlook in that Notes are like sticky notes. You type the information you want on them and can open them up and look at them any time you'd like, but there is only one font choice. They also do not come up in email search results. Posts, on the other hand, are like emails in terms of the abilities to type and format text, search for content, and forward the content to other people.

I am currently using Outlook 2010 and find the New Post button under New Items, then More Items. With a right click, I can add the button to my Quick Access Toolbar to keep it handy. When I choose that button, I can type and format my note however I would like. When I do a search, if the Post matches my search criteria, it shows up in the search results list. When I get new information related to an existing Post, I can open it up and edit it. And, as mentioned earlier, I have the ability to

open a Post and forward it as if it were an email.

To round out this solution, here are a few other tips that make this a great tool.

- **Create folders** to organize the different types of notes. I create folders by topics, teams, and types of solutions.
- **Create categories** to sort within the folders based on importance and set the view to group based on Category. I have a category for "Ideas" that helps me separate ideas from solutions.
- **Open a new Post** and add the "Move to Other Folder..." button to the Post's Quick Access Toolbar so Posts can quickly be moved from one folder to another if they get misfiled.
- **Type keywords** at the bottom of the Post. My keywords are terms that are related to the information in the Post but not otherwise used such as contextual versions of words. I often abbreviate Outlook as "OL" so I add that as a keyword to improve searching.
- **When searching**, use "AND" between



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terms to narrow the scope of the search. I do all my searches using the Search box above my email list. I click the blue hyperlink to "Try searching again in All Mail Items" as needed.

Once I found how well Posts worked for me, I started putting all my little pieces of paper in Outlook. I'm proud to say I've tackled the overload of information I deal with on a daily basis and have even gotten the number of stickies on my monitor down to 12. Those dozen are the ones that I want at my fingertips without having to do a search.

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She has been providing end-user technical support and software training to legal professionals for 13 years. In her current position, she uses remote access to troubleshoot a variety of software applications. She also develops custom databases and dabbles in Web design.

For the past three years, she has been writing articles and gathering tips and tricks for a monthly IT newsletter for Foster Swift.



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