

What's My Wait?

Say you want to send an e-mail. You're worried your recipient is too busy to read or respond to it. Asking them how busy they are would just create another e-mail. If you're lucky, your recipient has an auto-responder that tells you they're busy, but that also creates another e-mail. Let's not even start in on read receipts. The best you can do right now is send the e-mail and hope.

What's My Wait is a website that helps busy people tell the world how to communicate with them. Senders can get an estimate of when their e-mail will be read, and whether it might get a response. Senders can also find out if it's worth it to leave a voicemail and at what number.

While e-mail has changed how we communicate, it has also created problems stemming from e-mail being easy to send and hard to read and process. Senders persist in believing that the scenarios are equal. What's My Wait corrects that belief with a friendly service level agreement issued by the recipient. Savvy senders won't wonder when or if they'll get a response. Recipients won't feel bad about not getting back to everyone as quickly as they expect.

The What's My Wait Project

It is...

- A website
- Each recipient has their own page on the website, e.g. whatsmywait.com/yourname
- Can run on stats you provide about yourself, e.g. "I read about 100 e-mails per day."
- Will increasingly rely on real data provided by major e-mail services with APIs, e.g. gmail

It's not...

- An e-mail client
- An e-mail client plugin
- Spyware
- A universal inbox
- A universal outbox
- A backend e-mail service like exchange

How to read this proposal

Section 1: Sender's Experience (text)

Sender's Experience (sketches) <http://wmw.egrigg9000.com/Index.html>

(The text and sketches can be read side-by-side)

(Use light blue shading to see what's clickable in the sketches)

Section 2: Recipient's Experience (text)

Section 3: The Big Ask

Appendix: Server-Server calls

Section 1: Sender's Experience

wmw/home

A brochure page is placed on the domain containing:

- Short value proposition
- Access to the two use paths: Sender and Recipient
- Access to finding out how it works: Browse, E-mail, Voicemail, Calendar, and Create (for Recipients)

wmw/
yourname

Each recipient has their own page called a Wait Page. The Wait Page has 3 tabs for E-mail, Voicemail, and Calendar.

How to discover a recipient's Wait Page:

- Search for their name or e-mail address using WMW's Browse page
- Recipients may put the URL to their Wait Page in their e-mail autosig
- Recipients can embed their Wait Page in their own website
- Recipients (or applications that recipients use) may decide to build their own access to the information instead of using their Wait Page by using WMW's API
- The link to the WMW page can be **shared using social media**
- The link to the WMW page can be placed anywhere, such as linkedin bios etc.

wmw/
yourname/
email

The e-mail tab is the default tab on a recipient's Wait Page. On the left side, the sender pastes in the e-mail they're thinking of sending. The sender presses the "What's My Wait?" button. On the right side, WMW gives the sender a prediction of their place in line. The feeling will be similar to taking a number in a queue in real life.

After seeing their number, the sender might want to know how that number was generated. An expandable section "About your wait" includes a piece of text customized by the recipient and designed to explain the circumstances. This will give details such as, since **you're not married to the recipient or their direct boss** (for example), the place in line is first come first serve. And since no keywords in the message aligned with any high priority projects (such as bowling league or Disney world vacation), the place in line is still first come

first serve. The recipient may not get to reading your message at all, since s/he receives 300 per day, reads about 100 and responds to about 10.

Getting this news might be unpleasant for the sender, who if they had not visited WMW they might be lulled into complacency that the recipient will respond to the e-mail promptly, as that is the expectation of many senders using traditional e-mail clients regardless of the recipient's real life. To sweeten the news, WMW provides two ways to cut in line:

- 1) Send a meeting request instead, and/or
- 2) Use a subject line for their e-mail that is constructed by the recipient and designed to filter through their inbox accurately.

wmw/
yourname/
email/
subjectline

The e-mail tab on each Wait Page includes a recommended subject line generator. The sender fills out a questionnaire that fills out the subject line with rich information on the contents of the e-mail.

Who are you? Dropdown: Answers can be Friend, Family, Employer, Client, Employee, Vendor, Colleague, Fan, Nobody, Blast from the past, Not listed.

What is this about? Dropdown: Answers come from a recipient provided list and include in this example: Speaking gigs, Book tour, Book research, Corvettes, Date night, Trip to Disney World, Not listed.

Check all that apply: Checkboxes: Flags for priority, NRN, End of thread, FYI, and other common politenesses.

Time constraints: After what time can the recipient delete the message without reading it, or delete the message without doing what it asks. These dates indicate the last possible minute for the recipient to take any kind of action.

Let's take an example of an email with the former subject line of "Speaker at rally 11/1." Based on the form filled out, the suggested subject line will be: "Fan Speaking gigs High priority to me Mutual exchange Respond by 10/15"

wmw/ yourname/ voicemail

The Voicemail tab on the Wait Page operates similarly to the E-mail tab. The same rules regarding who is calling and what is this about will influence the response you get after pressing the What's My Wait button.

The sender types some information about what they would say on the call or the voicemail. The sender enters their phone number as well as the recipient's phone number (this narrows the scenario down to the exact phone the sender plans on calling). Then a response is generated on the right side of the page.

If the recipient has functioning voicemail on that line, the place in line is generated based on the recipient-disclosed information about how often they check the messages and whether the sender is a known caller. The recipient may not have functioning voicemail (either it doesn't work or won't be checked), and that information will be disclosed to the caller.

If the caller is interested in an overview of all phones such as home, work, and cell, they can access a page that discloses this information. This overview can have a human side to it, such as **good times to call and why**. The recipient shares this information because they can talk longer if people call the right number at the right time.

wmw/ yourname/ calendar

The calendar tab on the Wait Page is there for the following reasons:

- From the sender's perspective, the e-mail wait time may be too long and some opportunity may be missed.
- The sender wants a meeting, but doesn't want to send e-mails back and forth about the meeting. In the recipient's life, a meeting is easier than e-mail.
- The sender wants a very high success rate for the date time location and subject of the meeting invitation. They want it to be accepted.
- The recipient wants to help senders find appropriate times for the meeting to happen. If the recipient is in crunch mode regarding an existing project, it is not the time to go into detail on new projects. But a couple weeks from now, all that changes. **The recipient wants the right meeting at the right time.**
- The recipient wants to influence the meetings s/he

accepts so that they are successful and a good use of everyone's time. The use of **sample templates** is integrated into the guidance provided on the Wait Page calendar tab.

The functionality is very similar to the E-mail and Voicemail tabs. The sender enters their information on the left and presses the What's My Wait button. On the right, rather than a place in line, the sender gets a proposed time slot for the meeting. The expandable section "About your wait" can give details such as being in crunch mode until a certain date. The sender can view additional timeslots (but nothing earlier), and access any templates the sender has provided to influence whether the meeting is accepted and successful.

Sketches for the Sender's User Experience

<http://wmw.egrigg9000.com/Index.html>

Section 2: Recipient's Experience

The Create path from the WMW home page will include the following functionality for recipients:

- Claim unique username for the WMW service
- **Flesh out profile** (name and photo) from Twitter or Facebook
- A web form populates a single XML file with all the user-adjustable fields and objects. (Until the web form is built, the XML file can be manually uploaded or pasted in). These fields include stats for incoming messages, read rate, response rate, listing e-mail accounts and phone numbers, listing contact information and preferred contacts, listing projects and relevant keywords, adjusting text for infinite wait times or having gone dark.
- If stats and contact lists can be grabbed automatically from the e-mail provider's published APIs, this step is performed and the data overrides the recipient's estimates.
- When verified as error-free, WMW contains links to share the Wait Page through Twitter, Facebook, text for an e-mail autosig, and business cards via a partner.
- Some recipients may want to be listed privately.

Section 3: The Big Ask

There are three steps that will help to reinvent e-mail:

- 1) Introduce a service adjacent to traditional e-mail clients that helps even up the workload and expectations between senders and recipients.
>> That's this proposal, "What's My Wait."
- 2) Take the set of features from What's My Wait and build them directly in to the sending and receiving process. After an e-mail is sent and received by the recipient, it's still a living document of sorts, where it can go up or down in priority as well as up or down in line depending on the workload of the recipient. It's like getting real-time feedback on how fast the line is moving.
- 3) Provide senders and recipients with the means to structure their data and reward them for doing so. Structured data saves everyone time because it does not need to be read and processed like an unstructured e-mail. Instead, it just drops in to the visualization on the client that is appropriate for the data format. Examples of data that can be structured include financial reports, resumes, schedules, trip itineraries, todo lists, proposals, and presentations. The true benefit of creating this ecosystem may actually be that a platform will exist from which to experience the semantic web that is emerging through microformats.

With each step described above, the goal of eliminating "e-mail" off our todo lists gets closer and closer. Imagine a world where the only e-mail you end up reading (in the traditional way you read ALL e-mails right now) is information that a human has to read. Requests for your expertise. Open ended discussions. It would be a little like visiting your postal mailbox and getting only personal letters, not a single bill or advertisement.

The big ask to you, readers of this proposal for What's My Wait, is to encourage the development of a product that meets all three goals described above. A spec is in progress which documents the full feature set through to the third step. An excerpt:

"Say helicopters are flying over your house every day dumping a combination of garbage, love letters, and thousand dollar bills on your property. They never miss. You can erect funnels and employ an army of bluebirds to sort through the mess according to your instructions, but the root problem is the helicopter."

Thanks in advance for your support.

Appendix: Server-Server Calls

The highlighted areas in the above document describe functionality that requires a server to server call. WMW can evolve from basic (making only a few of these calls), to a deluxe implementation with the works. This chart covers when those calls would happen, and one example for what exact call could be made.

Functionality	Basic	Deluxe
>> Example API Link (Other providers can be added during development – Oauth permissions need to be gained for each provider)		
Share Wait Page using social media >> https://dev.twitter.com/docs/tweet-button		X
Is the sender a preferred sender (e.g. spouse or boss) >> http://code.google.com/apis/contacts/docs/3.0/developers_guide.html#Groups	X	
Is the sender on the contact list >> http://code.google.com/apis/contacts/docs/3.0/developers_guide.html#retrieving_single_contact	X	
Emails received per day/week >> http://code.google.com/apis/gmail/docs/#oauth		X
Emails read per day/week >> http://code.google.com/apis/gmail/docs/#oauth		X
Emails responded to per day/week >> http://code.google.com/apis/gmail/docs/#oauth		X
Using filters? Help us simulate the results (looking for API)		X
Good times to call on recipient's calendar >> http://code.google.com/apis/calendar/data/2.0/developers_guide_protocol.html#CreatingEvents	X	
List appointment slots >> (Note no API yet for official appointment slots feature – can work around using free/busy OR office hours) http://code.google.com/apis/calendar/data/2.0/developers_guide_protocol.html#FreeBusy	X	
List sample templates >> http://code.google.com/apis/documents/docs/3.0/developers_guide_protocol.html#SearchingDocs		X
Populate my profile >> (Still looking for avatar picture retrieval) https://dev.twitter.com/docs/api/1/get/users/show		X