STRATEGIES

# Antidotes to Email Malaise: Slack and Wunderlist

Kevin Hanson is director of finance and operations at The Children's School, an Atlanta day school serving 400 students age 3 to grade 6, and expanding to grades 7 and 8 over the next two years.
tcsatl.org

Last year we started using two applications, Slack and Wunderlist, to help our school's administrative teams stem the unrelenting tide of emails and to cut down on the amount of time we spend checking email. When used together, the apps help our teams better track how much progress has been made on a task and what work remains to be done.

slack (**slack.com**) is a communications tool we use for internal communication. We still rely on email for external communication, that is, with people outside the school, but we turn to Slack for sending messages and documents among team members and between individual staff members. One thing I like about Slack is its "channels" for the executive team or the personnel team or the business office. Any time there's a message in a particular channel, anyone on that team can see it. When you want to send a team message, you don't have to think, Who should I include in this email? — it's all right there. You can also send direct messages to individuals or smaller groups. It works a lot like messaging on your smartphone.

Using Slack has cut down on the number of times we have to check email, and the visual notifications on your smartphone or tablet app make it clear when there's a Slack message waiting for you. Internal communication is definitely quicker.
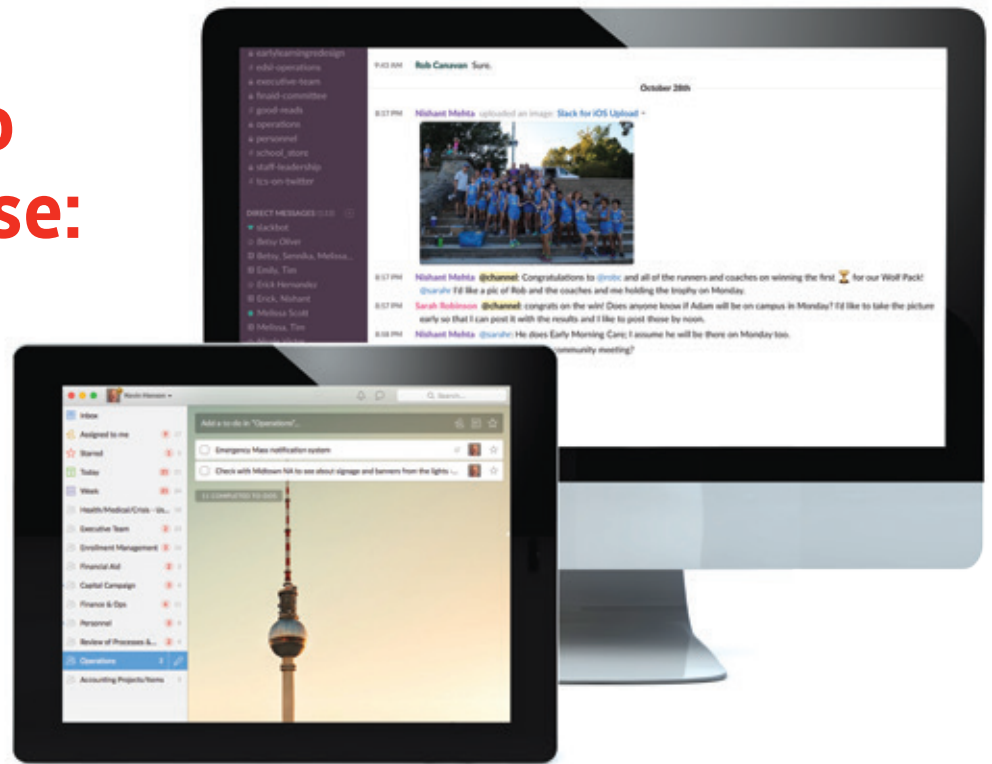
Wunderlist (**wunderlist.com**) makes it possible for anyone on a team to create a to-do list and assign tasks to team members. All team members can see what's assigned to themselves and others, and due dates are clear. When you've completed a task, you mark it as complete. Projects are color-coded based on their progress — when more items are complete, the color of the task changes, so it's easy to see how much more work needs to be done. Wunderlist integrates with Slack, so I assign tasks in just one place.

There's definitely a learning curve associated with these apps. One member of our team had trouble learning how Slack works — channels are different from email folders, for example. The apps take some getting used to, but if you've sent messages on your phone, the transition should be fairly intuitive.

Our head of school, Nishant Mehta, was the driving force behind adopting the applications, and we've tweaked how we've used them over the course of the year. I'm sure we'll continue to refine our processes in the year ahead as well. Ⓝ

To share a strategy that makes your business office more effective or efficient, email ***NetAssets@nboa.org***. In the subject line, type **STRATEGIES**.