

Y Combinator responds to inquiries 7 times faster with Front

INDUSTRY

FINANCIAL SERVICES

COMPANY SIZE

1 - 50

Y Combinator is a startup accelerator that has funded more than 2,000 startups to date since 2005. They have created a community of more than 5,000 founders of companies that have a combined valuation of over \$150B.

They fund startups in batches, twice each year, from January through March and June through August. One of the most valuable components of being a Y Combinator funded company is the access to mentorship and a network of other cofounders, partners, investors and potential acquirers.

Challenge

Y Combinator runs multiple programs and events, each with their own email alias. Their bi-annual batches also have their own email alias, as well as their inboxes for general inquiries, applications and other matters. In total, they have more than 20 separate email aliases being managed by staff and partners.

To manage these inboxes, Y Combinator used Google Groups, but this imposed a very time-consuming and confusing process for the team. They had to constantly toggle between accounts, without any clear visibility into which conversations had already been responded to, were in progress, or still needed someone's attention.

Their general inquiries inbox receives the most emails but they had to be forwarded to the correct person or Google Group within Y Combinator. Additionally, the admin of the Google Group would often not know the answer, so they forwarded the message to the right Y Combinator partner to respond. This process led to many conversations falling through the cracks, overwhelmed staff, and prolonged response times of up to a week.

Solution

With the increasing number of team inboxes that Y Combinator manages, it became apparent that they needed a better solution. While they searched for a new solution, Front was accepted to their Summer 2014 batch, and they jumped at the idea of adopting Front for themselves.

Responding to every message 7x faster

The most drastic improvement for Y Combinator has been its response times. By having access to all of their inboxes in one place, they're now responding 7 times faster. Before Front, it would be hard for everyone to reach "inbox zero" and messages would sometimes go unresponded for a week. Now, they're able to clear all their tasks every day and nothing stays in someone's inbox for more than a day.

Automation gets message to the right partner instantly

Front completely redefined the way Y Combinator manages their multiple team inboxes. Instead of manually forwarding emails that came into the general inquiries inbox, they're automatically assigned to the right Y Combinator partner via rules defined by keywords in the body or subject of the email.

Internal @mentions eliminate confusing forwarded email threads

Staff members no longer have to forward emails to partners when they need help on a response. They can simply @mention a partner, add a comment to the incoming message, and internally collaborate before the staffer writes a response. Keeping one single version of the conversation and having the internal discussion within it is key to avoiding lost messages and confusion.

Accountability keeps messages from falling through the cracks

With Front, the Y Combinator staff can easily assign a message to a partner, part-time partner, or another staff member to clearly signal ownership and accountability.

This has been extremely important in preventing conversations from falling through the cracks. When someone is on vacation or out of the office, conversations assigned to them can be immediately reassigned, or if they remain unassigned in the team inbox, another staffer can take care of them in a timely manner.

Working faster with message templates to jumpstart their replies

The Y Combinator team has become considerably more productive with Front. Many of the emails coming into the general inquiries inbox are recurring questions. They're now able to create message templates to quickly and accurately respond to these questions in 1-click, without having to constantly rewrite them. The staff and partners can easily manage and have visibility into all the team inboxes without toggling back and forth between each Google Group. They can add or remove inboxes, and surface and respond to all conversations from Front.

Transparency and visibility keeps everyone informed

Y Combinator's partners and employees have complete transparency into all communications, which ensures that everyone is on the same page. This way no one gets blind-sided by an event that could be happening tomorrow that they weren't aware of. Conversations no longer fall through the cracks thanks to the ability to assign, comment, and set reminders in Front.

20**Managed email aliases****1-click****Automated responses****7x****Faster response times**