Y Combinator Responds to Inquiries 7 Times Faster with Front

COMPANY BACKGROUND

> *Y Combinator is a startup accelerator that has been providing seed funding for startups since 2005.*

Y Combinator has a novel approach to seed funding: they fund startups in batches. There are two batches each year, January through March and June through August. In addition, 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.

To date, **Y Combinator has funded more than 800 startups**, and has created a community of more than 1,600 founders of companies that have a combined valuation of over $30B.

CHALLENGE

Y Combinator runs multiple programs and events, each of which have their own email alias. In addition, each of their bi-annual batches have their own email alias, as do their inboxes for General Inquiries, Applications and other matters. **This adds up to more than 20 separate email aliases being managed by staff and partners.**

To manage these inboxes, Y Combinator was using Google Groups. This imposed a very time-consuming and confusing process for the team. Staff 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.

The General Inquiries inbox, info@ycombinator.com, receives the largest volume of emails. However, many of these emails are of a specific topic, meaning they had to be forwarded to the correct person or Google Group within YC.

Also, it was common that the admin of a Google Group would not know the answer, meaning they would also have to forward the message to the right YC partner so that they could respond to the sender.
This process lead 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 were searching for a new solution, Front was accepted to their Summer 2014 batch, and they jumped at the idea of adopting Front for themselves.

Front completely redefined the way Y Combinator was managing their multiple team inboxes. Instead of manually forwarding emails that came into the General Inquiries inbox, these are **automatically assigned to the correct YC partner via rules defined by keywords in the body or subject of the email.**

Also, **there is no longer a need to forward emails** when a staff member doesn't know the answer to an email and requires a partner's knowledge in order to respond. They simply @mention a partner and add a comment to the same incoming message, which allows them to internally collaborate and find the answer before a response is created. Keeping one single version of the conversation, and having all collaboration occur within it, is key to avoiding lost messages and confusion.

The **ability to clearly indicate who should take action** and respond to a conversation was also extremely important in order to prevent conversations 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.

In addition, when someone is on vacation or out of the office, the conversations that are assigned to them can be immediately reassigned, or if they remain unassigned in the team inbox someone else can take care of them in a timely manner.

Also, many of the emails coming into General Inquiries are recurring questions. Y Combinator is now able to **create canned responses, to quickly and accurately respond** to these questions in 1-click, without having to constantly rewrite them.

Today, Y Combinator's staff and partners are able to easily manage and have visibility into all the team inboxes without having to toggle back and forth between each Google Group. They add or remove inboxes, surface and respond to all conversations via Front.

RESULTS

YCombinator's benefits of using Front are plenty. By having access to all of their inboxes in one place, the team has become considerably more productive. The most drastic improvement was in **response times: they are now 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 are able to clear all their tasks every day; nothing stays in someone's inbox for more than a day.

In addition to this, 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-sighted 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, or set reminders in Front.

Y Combinator