

Organizing Tips for the Clutter Prone

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We all have some clutter - but if it becomes a problem for you it may be time to take action. Clutter is only a problem if you are missing items or information you need, waste too much time looking for things, or are missing deadlines because your schedule is too cluttered. Otherwise, don't worry about it!

It happens because we have not set up easy to use systems for our "stuff" or papers, we have not given items a home, we have not maintained the system - put things back where they live - or sometimes because we have trouble making decisions.

Your time is precious, and if you spend a total of just half an hour per day looking for things, that is over one full work day every month. And for some people it is much more than half an hour a day!

Your systems can be maintained in about 15 minutes a day or you can spend hours at a crucial time trying to find essential material or information.

If you have decided it is time to clear the clutter and re-organize, one of the difficult questions is when to toss things. Don't keep it just in case - ask yourself these questions:

- Does this require action?
- Under what circumstances would I use it again? And would I use it again or get an updated version?
- Is it stored/archived somewhere else in the company or elsewhere?
- Are there legal reasons to keep it? If so, can it be stored elsewhere?
- What is the worst that could happen if I toss it?

Organizing for Ease of Performance

Position your phone, computer, etc. according to your dominant hand (hand you use for the task), and aim for a U-shaped, or at least L-shaped, layout. A galley set up - with a cabinet or credenza behind your desk, is third best.

Organize equipment and supplies in "zones" by function - paperwork; computer; printing; phone ; reference; and a launch pad - things you need to take with you when you leave the office or workspace.

Desks

Keep only those items you DO use daily on your desk, and remember that desks are work spaces, not storage areas! Use baskets or a standing file to sort paper - action, to file, to refer, to read. Make a regular space for your calendar/planner so it does not get lost in the shuffle.

Filing Systems

Usage, not storage, should form the basis of your filing system - the point is to find things when you need them, not to tuck them out of sight forever! Ask yourself why you are keeping it - for what purpose? How will I use it again and what word will come to mind if I need to find it? Use clear, simple categories that reflect your concerns. Purge files at least once per year - get rid of duplicates, outdated material, and earlier drafts. Keep files lean and useful!

Ending Paper Pile Up

Sort all incoming paper into File, Act, or Toss - and throw the "toss" stuff out immediately. Schedule actions with calendar holding or tickler files, and think before you keep!

Keep your action files handiest -so you can easily sort incoming mail (next to recycling bin). Separate currently used files from storage or archive files - the latter do not need to be handy. A taller file cabinet gives more room for the same footprint. Literature sorters and clear boxes can help the visually oriented maintain order - if you are not comfortable putting things away in files, try one of these methods to keep everything out, but organized!

These are just a few ideas to help you sort out your clutter - if you have questions about organizing or time management issues, please call Morva at (204) 797-8480. And remember that being organized is not about being neat - it is about being effective, and making it easier for yourself!

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