

**Business Bullet ~
Get Organized in 2011!
You can do it one step at a time.**

Overwhelmed by piles of paper? Getting organized means more than just cleaning up your desk. Clutter in the workplace ranges from merely annoying to nearly paralyzing and is always detrimental to productivity. A cluttered work environment also projects an unfavorable image to clients and associates. When the desktop becomes a storage place rather than a workspace, it's time to reorganize.

Here are some simple secrets to getting started.

GET MOTIVATED.

Attitude is everything. If you say, "I can't do this," then there's a good chance you won't. However, if you say "I can do this," there's an excellent chance you will.

Take a few moments to think about how wonderful it's going to be when you get that desk organized, or when you make more room in the file cabinets because you have just boxed up and stored those old files you haven't needed in several years. Think of the extra time you will now have because you will be able to find what you need in seconds rather than long minutes, or even an hour or two.

SET GOALS.

Make a list of all the things you want to organize, whether those items are your storage space, your office or your time. When you're done with your list choose ONE item on it. That is going to be your 'major' goal.

Now, take that 'major' goal, and break it down into smaller, bite-sized pieces. Those will be your mini-goals. One by one, you're now going to achieve each of your mini-goals, until each one is completed. Once the final one is completed, you will have accomplished your major goal. Here's an example:

Major Goal: Organize the 3-drawer file cabinet for current business

Mini-Goal 1: Remove non-current files/folders and place in a box

Mini-Goal 2: Make 3 file drawer labels: Short-Term/Project Clients, Long-Term Clients, Potential Clients

Mini-Goal 3: Arrange folders for clients into alphabetical order and place into proper drawer

ESTABLISH DEADLINES.

"I'll get to it, when I have time," never works. You're not going to find the time unless you schedule time. You should set a specific deadline for each of your mini-goals. Here's an example:

Major Goal: Reorganize Business Storage Room

Mini-Goal 1: Remove everything from the room (March 4)

Mini-Goal 2: Sweep out storage room & make up a room layout design (March 5)

Mini-Goal 3: Move in labeled boxes for far wall and stack; move in all file cabinets (March 6)

Mini-Goal 4: Place shelf unit with paper supplies on wall near door to storage room (March 7)

Mini-Goal 5: Place 2 labeled large plastic bins on opposite wall for temporary storage of items (March 7)

GET GOOD DESK SPACE.

Sometimes when we have clutter around our desk, it is because we don't have enough desk surface space. If you need to add on an additional hutch or shelving for your desk, do it. Then, determine what makes sense for that new space, that will help you stay organized. And if you need to add stackable or individual organizational pieces, do that too, such as in-box or out-box or to-do box, etc. Make sure your space will work for what you need to get your work done in a timely and organized fashion.

TIME MANAGEMENT.

Speaking of timely, what about your time management? One of the simplest ways to make better use of your time is to re-think how long tasks will actually take, and schedule accordingly. Visualize yourself completing a task from start to finish and what actions you must take. Until you get more accurate at estimating, add 25% to the time you think you'll

Need to complete a certain task. Another way to realize actual time is to time yourself while you do different things, such as writing proposals, letters, filing projects, working on parts of projects, client meetings, etc. You might be surprised to find out how long things actually take or how quickly they can be done. When running errands between business appointments, always allow for unexpected circumstances such as traffic or long lines.

PURGE PAPER.

Many people accumulate paper clutter due to a fear of throwing away something important, or a concern that it may be needed later. The result is that they end up keeping everything and not being able to discern which things have present or future value and which can be safely discarded. The reality is that 80% of the paper saved 'just in case' is never needed again, and if it is, the chances are very good that it can be recreated or obtained from another source. From mail to fax to advertisements and memos, paper is the largest contributor to clutter in an office environment. In order to avoid a rapid build-up of paper, a regular paper maintenance system is a necessity in every office. Remember, your trash can and shredder are your friends.

REAP THE REWARDS.

Sometimes it helps to establish rewards for yourself or others when you take on a reorganization project, no matter what the size. This will add to your motivation, but would need to be something really enticing, not just being able to stand there and look at your uncluttered desk and say "Whew!" When you reach mini-goals, take a break and enjoy something, such as a 15-minute power nap in the backyard hammock, or giving yourself a 'chore free' day, take yourself out to lunch, or listen to some music and enjoy a cup of tea. Post your goals, deadlines and pending rewards in a prominent place, where you're sure to see them every day.

Keep in mind that getting organized is a process rather than an event, so don't expect miracles overnight. You can speed the process along by hiring help, such as a professional organizer, who would work side by side with you and keep you focused. If you do plan on tackling the reorganizing project yourself, it's possible to make a good amount of headway in a relatively short time if you have a game plan and some goals in mind before you start. Just start in one place and keep at it, and before long you'll be amazed at the results you see.

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