

Redeem The Hours—Get Organized In 2007

By Terri Stephens



According to a Wall Street Journal report, white collar workers waste an average of up to 40% of their workday. It's not because they aren't smart, but because they were never taught organizing skills to cope with the increasing workloads and demands. When you consider that the average U.S. executive loses six weeks per year retrieving misplaced information from messy desks and files, the cost in salary and lost productivity is enormous.

With the New Year upon us, is one of your goals getting a better handle on your time? Have you dreamed about getting organized once and for all so you don't feel like you're going around in circles wasting valuable time, money, and energy? Are you tired of the stress caused by being disorganized and aren't sure where to start? Here are a few basics to keep things simple as you begin the process.

Rather than viewing a whole room that's a mess and feeling overwhelmed, focus on one area at a time. If the problem is your office, start with your desktop. Begin the organizing process by starting with what is most current, and commit to keeping on top of what is coming in today.

If you're dealing with too much paper (and who isn't?), then trim the F.A.T.

FILE—Reference material should be placed in a tray TO FILE

ACT—Items requiring action should be placed in your Tickler File System

TOSS—Just as the name implies, get rid of it!

Use colored folders to set up a Tickler File System for items that require action and write time-sensitive tasks on your calendar or planner. Folders should be tailored

to your needs, but could include the following: *Call, Write/Send, Review, Follow-up, Data Entry, Decisions, Expense Reimbursement, Projects, Proposals, etc.*

Take a few minutes each day to Trim the Fat so paperwork doesn't begin to pile up again. Eliminating the clutter will help tremendously to clear your mind so you can focus on the task at hand without becoming distracted.

Once you experience what it's like to gain control over what's current, begin to go back through older projects and complete them in order of importance. Set aside time in your schedule just as you would anything else that's important.

Don't believe the myth that getting organized is a waste of time and keeps you from doing your job, making money, or enjoying more pleasurable pursuits. Nothing could be further from the truth! By making organizing a priority, you'll discover it's much easier to keep up—and that will have far-reaching benefits in your life.

Finally, have a support system. Enlist the help of an organizing professional who can be objective and is not emotionally attached to your "stuff." This kind of help is especially valuable during the purging (toss) phase to help determine what is worth keeping and what is no longer serving a useful purpose in your life. A professional organizer provides ideas, structure, solutions, and systems to help people who are stressed out because they have more to do, with fewer resources, in their homes or offices. So stop procrastinating and make a commitment to get organized in 2007!

Terri Stephens is a professional organizer and founder of Real Order Professional Organizing, in Dawsonville, Georgia. Real Order's mission is to create harmony out of chaos by setting up organized systems in homes, home offices, and small businesses. Stephens is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers and the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization. For more information, call 513-678-6585 or visit www.therealorder.com.