Organized Solutions for Your Office

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Organized Living Solutions

Being disorganized can be stressful, inefficient and hurt your business. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the average U.S. executive wastes six weeks each year searching for missing information on messy desks and in disorganized files. That translates into one hour per day. Imagine what you could do by reclaiming that time.

Here are some tips to help you get you started:

- **Apply the 80/20 rule to your office.** We use 20% of our files, contacts and information 80% of the time. That means more than 80% of filed documents are never retrieved. Think about circumstances that would require the information again, and decide if it is worth it to keep track of the document or file.

- **Toss the paper, keep the source.** If you need to have the most current statistics, why file a paper that will have out-of-date information in a few months? Keep the contact information of a few experts in the field, and with a phone call, you will have the most up-to-date information.

- **Be Proactive, not reactive.** Try spending the first 10-15 minutes of your day planning and determining what you need to accomplish. Even if you do not get through everything, you will not be functioning in response-only mode. Responding to every e-mail, fax, phone call, voicemail, letter and person that comes into your office could take all your time, but it won't necessarily accomplish what needs to be accomplished.

- **Write it down.** To save your brain from having to remember every detail, use your calendar and to-do lists to chart and track everything you can. When your brain is freed from the little things, it has more time to dream up big ideas and solutions.

- **Make appointments with yourself.** Make at least one screened appointment with yourself each day. This is quiet, uninterrupted time when you can concentrate on a project or catch up on your reading.

- **Don't get mired in e-mail.** There will always be e-mails to respond to. Try to do e-mail at regularly scheduled times throughout the day, rather than having it open all day long. It can be too easy to not get any quality work done on projects when the e-mails are flying back and forth. Try to close it down for at least two hours a day.

- **Decide to decide.** Clutter is the physical manifestation of indecision. Sometimes we don't know the answer and have to seek it out; sometimes it is a painful or frustrating decision, so we delay making it. Most things that move from pile to pile require a decision to be made. If you find yourself thinking, "I'll decide about this later," ask yourself what will be different later. Will you have different information later, or are you just putting off making an uncomfortable decision?

Following these tips will not only help you get organized, but also regain wasted time and energy. **BW**