

## FILING – DEALING WITH YOUR PAPER PILES

### EVER HEARD OF O.H.I.O.?

Everyone's heard of Ohio but have you heard of O.H.I.O.? Yes, I know there is a state by that name. What I am referring to is "Only Handle It Once." This is a paper management system that is definitely for those who do not have trouble making a decision. In today's fast-paced world, you are doing very well if you can take a look at every piece of paper and make a quick and accurate decision on where it should go and what should be done with it. Many people cringe when they hear that they should only handle a piece of paper once. One person told me that if they had to follow that rule, they would just keep everything because they were unable to make a decision in one look. Don't let O.H.I.O. get you down. Set up files for those papers you know what to do with immediately. If you run across something that you just aren't sure you want or need to keep, set up a special file. When you purge your files in six months or a year, then you can decide what to do with it.

### FILE INDEX

One of the most important tools to use when doing your filing is a file index. This is your way of inventorying your files. It is easy to file papers away but the real test of a filing system is to be able to find your information back when you need it. For example, when you set up a file and call it "Car," set up a notation in a notebook, computer file or some other type of reference paper and list what you are putting in the file called "Car." Is that where you will keep your records on car maintenance and the car insurance? Or will you be keeping other items there that also pertain to your car. Whatever it is, keep a note of what is going into that file. This helps to cut down duplication that occurs when we set up more than one file pertaining to the same subject. This happens when we can't remember what name we used the last time we filed something on that subject.

### CALENDAR

In dealing with your papers it is important to at least mention something about your calendar. When you come to those items that need action this is one area that can be handled quickly by using your calendar. If the action for that item is a date reference, put it on your calendar or PDF immediately. Record all the information you need about who, what, when, where and why. Then in most cases you can discard the paper. If a paper requires action on your part and there is no specific deadline listed, then this is where it would be important to set up a goal so you can keep on top of the project.

## PURGE YOUR FILES

At the end of each year, purge your files of everything you will not need during the upcoming year. Place the items you are planning to keep in a banker's box in your archive files. These are the files that can be stored in an out-of-the-way place.

When taming your paper piles, remember it is better to deal with it in small sessions instead of trying to climb a seemingly insurmountable mountain of paper that has buried you. When your mind begins to blur, take a break or stop filing for the day and start again tomorrow.

### “COLD” STORAGE FILES

If you have a filing system that is overflowing you can consider dividing and conquering your files by setting up three categories: “cold” storage, occasional use and currently used or daily files. The “cold” storage would be your archive files or files with historical, sentimental or legal value. These can be stored in your attic or garage. Remember with these cold files that you might want to make an inventory sheet and keep it in your file index folder so you will know what's in those boxes in the attic without climbing into the attic to go through them. The occasional files are the ones you refer to once in a while or even once a year, such as a tax file. These files can be stored in file cabinets in your office. Current files are the files you consult frequently or need access to instantly. These files should go in your immediate desk area.

Paper certainly does represent its own unique set of problems in our lives. Each person has to develop their own particular way of dealing with paper. Find the system that best suits you and your life and put that paper tiger back in its cage for good.

Further information on many of the ideas in this article can be obtained by attending a "SIMPLY ORGANIZED" seminar featuring the GO (Get Organized) System. If you are interested in getting organized and staying organized, this three hour seminar has a different approach and its many realistic, useful and practical suggestions will help you change your life. Check the website calendar for the next scheduled class.

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