

USING YOUR BRAINPOWER TO OVERPOWER YOUR CLUTTER AND GET ORGANIZED

Feeling Overwhelmed? Frustrated?

Join the crowd. Lately when I have met with new or prospective clients, those two words, “overwhelmed” and “frustrated,” come up all the time. People are reading organizing books, attending seminars or buying a new gadget to help them get organized. They are searching for an answer to their clutter and organizing dilemmas. If they just buy another piece of software, a new PDA or five more plastic containers, they’re convinced that will be just the thing to get them organized.

What they don’t realize is that each of us already owns the most powerful organizing tool they will ever need. What is that? Your brain! Getting organized begins with your mind. When you finally get to that point when you are tired of the mess, being late because you can’t find your car keys, or forgetting important meetings or appointments, and you decide you are going to change your situation, you are on your way to changing your life.

Why can’t people get organized? There are six major issues that generate chaos and disorder in people’s lives. You have to address all six issues before you can get organized and stay organized. What are those six issues?

1. Resourcefully handling all the information coming into your life each day – papers, voicemails, emails, faxes, verbal requests and your own thoughts.
2. Prioritizing your workload so you are more productive.
3. Time management (I know you hear this all the time, but it is important to becoming more organized.)
4. Project management – how to take your idea from inception to closure?
5. Personality issues – understanding how personality attributes impact your work.
6. Psychological issues – dealing with dysfunctional behavior.

Fixing any one of these problems will not get you organized and keep you organized. For example, if you have a car with six repair problems – bad brakes, dead battery, flat tire, broken ignition, leaking transmission, and no gas – you will not be able to drive the car if you fix only one of them. Having a great time management system but no way to handle incoming papers, emails and voicemails will not help you get and stay organized.

Many clients often hand me a stack of organizing books which they have accumulated over the years, hoping each one would give them the tip they needed to finally get organized. But just reading a book will not do it. You can’t lose weight by simply reading a diet book and you can’t learn to drive by reading a driving manual. You have to read, get some ideas and then try them out. Some ideas work and others don’t but you’ll never know until you try. Remember too that it takes between 21 and 30 days to convert a routine into a habit. Don’t give up too soon. Repetition is the key to success.

Is your office a mess – cluttered up with piles of papers and stacks of publications? When someone walks into this situation what do they think of you? What does this image project to those you work with, your boss? your employees? Your boss may think he can't give you a promotion because you don't seem to be able to handle what you have now. Your employees may not have a high opinion of you and your chaos.

You have to identify and change the habits that are creating the disorganized part of your life if you want to get organized. Simplify your life as much as you can. A client recently bought a new Palm Pilot but then spent days not using it because she did not have the time to sit down and learn all the new features. She wanted a crash course in using it without spending time to learn it herself. When you buy that new Palm Pilot or piece of software or some other new gadget, remember that it comes with a manual on how to use it, but it does not come with a guarantee that it will make you an organized person overnight. Only if you constantly work on your habits will you make a lasting and constant change. Think in terms of habit-based solutions as opposed to gadget-based solutions. When you maintain these habits, you will significantly increase your chances of getting organized and staying organized.

Since the average person spends 30 minutes to two hours a day looking for things in their office, think of new ways to do your work. People often can't let go of their old way of doing something so they lose the opportunity to get rid of their frustration. Look for old ways of doing things that are keeping you from getting organized. Let them go and try something new!

Further information on many of the ideas mentioned here 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.

I'd be happy to answer any organizing questions. Please send them to:

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