

Sharpening Your EDGE Volume 3 - Issue 3

SPRING CLEANING! CLEAN UP AND CLEAR OUT FOR BETTER FOCUS

It's spring! The days begin to warm, the trees and flowers are blooming and we get the urge to clean up, clear out and simplify. With this newsletter, we bring you tips for effective spring cleaning, so that you can spend your time on what you need to do and get the right things done!

Most of us keep a lot of information we never look at again. As a matter of fact, 80% of what we keep we don't need! So why are you drowning yourself in all that unnecessary stuff? Remember, "Garbage In/Garbage Out" – file junk and you'll find junk!

We need a system for both our physical world – paper on our desk, sticky notes, hard copy files – and our electronic world. Having a system and being organized isn't just about being tidy; it helps minimize distractions so you can focus on the work in front of you.

You might tackle your spring cleaning on your own or consider scheduling a morning or afternoon of 'spring cleaning' for your team. Let everyone wear jeans, order pizza and have everyone tackle their workspace -- and NO meetings! It works well and gets everyone energized around the idea.

Make sure to have supplies handy BEFORE you begin including recycle bins, trash cans, file folders, label makers, tape and CD's for storage.

Start by picking one area – one corner or drawer of your desk, your e-mail inbox or one folder of your electronic files. Acknowledge that you can't and don't



need to keep everything. Then, ask yourself these questions as you evaluate each item:

- Do I really need this?
- Is there a legal, tax or other compliance policy reason to keep it?
- Does it exist in an electronic format somewhere or could I get it again if I really needed it? (You rarely need to keep both a paper and electronic copy.)
- By the time I look at it again will it have any relevance? How is this going to make my life easier or better by keeping it?
- What is the worst that could happen if I Dumped it?

As you organize your files, create a file system that looks as similar as possible for all locations – e-mail, electronic and paper. Having a similar structure for all of your files makes it easier for you to file and to find things later. **Remember, when it's hard to file, you won't do it.** Keep your filing system simple so you can quickly find what you need and it is easy to store things.

Tip of the Month: Cleaning Out Your Paper

Have a bunch of piles on your desk? Most of us pile because we don't file. We don't have a system for dealing with our paper or our system is too complex. Use the following steps to get your paper under control.

- Start with one part of your office – one pile on your desk or one overflowing drawer – and place each piece of paper in one of 7 stacks:
 1. Belongs to someone else
 2. Belongs somewhere else
 3. Give away to others – things like promotional materials or books
 4. Trash
 5. Recycle
 6. Actions – something you need to do
 7. Reference – something you need to keep to refer back to later



- Repeat this process for each stack of paper or file drawer in your office. Look through each existing file to make sure that what is in the folder needs to be there and is still worth keeping.
- Deliver the things that belong to someone else or somewhere else. Take the Give-aways and put them in a common area where anyone who wants them can take them or take them to a charity that can pass them on to others who might need them. Empty out your trash and recycling.
- File your reference items.
- Now all you have to deal with are the things on which you need to take action. Create a working file for those items in the closest drawer to you at your desk. If you travel frequently, use an expandable file folder like a Pendaflex to carry your working documents with you.

Clean Up and Clear Out! Let go of things you don't need and make room for new opportunities!

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