



## Office Organization: How to Organize an Office?

How often do I hear *Help: How do I Organize My Office?* If you live in South Jersey or Cherry Hill you can call me and I'll show you how, and I do provide organizer coaching by phone, but in lieu of that I give you my ***Organize Your Office 1-2-3 system.***

### **What you need to know about my 1-2-3 systems:**

I give you the most important points – not lots of extra information. You can get more details later – here I focus on the key points that will get you from stressed to streamlined as simply as possible.

### **Step 1: Break Your Project Up Into Small Manageable Parts.**

1. If you take on the whole project it will become overwhelming and paralyzing. By taking your office organization project one step at a time you will find success, little by little.
2. Understand that you didn't get disorganized overnight and you won't get organized overnight either. What you want is a plan to get yourself back on track.
3. Look around – what do you see. A desk? Office Supplies? A Computer with files all over the place? Email that haunts you? Post-it's everywhere? A File Cabinet? Those are your projects. Pick 3, or 4, of
5. Plan to work on one a week. Files...take a long time – you might want to leave that for last.

### **Step 2: Learn Some Basic Organizing Techniques**

1. It's important to group like things together. If you have 30 pens here, 20 there, 15 in another drawer, 25 in a basket and 10 on your desk it doesn't seem like a big deal. But if you see 100 pens all grouped together it will make sense to you to find another place for some of those pens– for when you have too much of anything it takes the place of the things that really are useful. And, when you have 100 pens (or magazines, or pamphlets to file, or binders, etc.) you have a lot of stuff to spend your time and energy taking care of.
2. When deciding what you should keep it is helpful to break things out in 3 piles
  - a. must keeps – keep because you use them all the time, they help you get something done, or they give you pleasure
  - b. don't need - donate, recycle or give to someone else
  - c. not sure - for our exercise here – we are going to box up all those not-sures and put them somewhere else. If you need them you can get them – but they aren't taking up your time, space or energy.

3. When organizing a space it only works when you take everything out. If you open a desk drawer and look inside you'll say - I use all that – it's all important. But if you take it all out and group like items together, you'll see that there are things that aren't so important. I want you to make the conscious decision to put back only the things that have purpose.

### **Step 3: Organize**

#### **Organize Your Desk:**

1. Clear off the surface – only put back the things you use every day. How many pencils do you really need out? 2,3, okay 4? The others can be in reach – but your surface is prime real estate. The more you have on it, the more distracted you'll be. The clearer it is the more you'll be able to focus on the task you are working on.
2. Clear off your bulletin board – yes, take everything down. What's relevant? What's obsolete? Recycle the obsolete – put back the important things and put the rest into a file called bulletin board contents.
3. Find a place close by for your current projects. I like to put them in a file drawer in my desk, or a binder on a bookcase behind my desk (one binder per project and label the spine so you can get your hands on it 1-2-3.) Some people like desk-top tray sorters. For that here is [my favorite](#).

#### **Organize Your Office Supplies:**

1. First start out by asking yourself what items you use...really use. If you used a report cover 15 years ago that doesn't justify really using. Then ask yourself what is a realistic number of each item I should have. It is realistic to have 25 note pads, though for me 3 or 4 is plenty. 100 note pads ( and it doesn't matter to me if they were free or not) takes too much space and work to maintain.
2. Put your supplies back based on frequency of use. If you use it all the time – it get prime placement. If you use it once in a while it's ok if you need to get out of your chair to get to it.
3. Find a great charity to donate your overflow supplies to. A portion of all non-profits proceeds go to office supplies – if you have too much, there is some organization that will benefit from your tax deductible donation (you deduct thrift shop value).

#### **Organize Your Email:**

1. Email can be useful, or not. To have it help your life then your inbox should serve as a to-do list, not a file cabinet. Most email providers/programs file folders (the things on the left of your emails). Leave your inbox for emails that need action. All others should be filed or deleted.
2. The easiest way to quickly file emails is chronologically by year. Make a file – label it 2011 and move all of this year's emails into it. You can then click on that file and find old emails by date – just like you say

you do in your inbox – but now your inbox is clear for relevant information. (Later you can go back and set up more specific files if you like).

3. A great tool for finding specific information in your emails is called Google Desktop. It is a free download and it will search your emails and files just like Google searches the internet. This one tip alone will save you hours of searching. It takes a bit of time to index the first time you use it, but after that it's as fast as any Google search.

### **Organize Your To-Do List:**

1. Keep one list – plan time once a week to consolidate all your post-it's, napkin notes, and scraps of paper on to your one list.
2. I like to use 2x3 post-it index cards to organize my to-do list into priorities. That way I don't have to always re-write everything. My categories are:
  - a. Critical – do it before the end of today
  - b. Hot – Either I really want to do it in the next few days, or, if I don't do it in the next few days, I lose an opportunity, it costs me money or I'm embarrassed.
  - c. Do it Sooner
  - d. Do it Later
3. There are so great electronic to-do lists out there too – but be careful about using your calendar for all your to-do's ... they tend to get skipped over or your calendar becomes so cluttered that you miss important appointments.

### **Organize Your Files:**

1. 85% of things put into files are never looked at again – only problem is you never know the 15% that you'll need. Every once in a while you need to go through your files and purge the obsolete 85% so your file can remain effective and useful.
2. A file should be between a ½ inch and 1 ½ inches thick – too thin and all you'll have are folders. Too thick and it takes too long to find what you are looking for.
3. Label your files like you think. There is no right or wrong. Do you think Honda, Car, Automobile, Vehicle? If your labels match your thinking you'll find the file every time!



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