

Ten Ways To Make Your Work Day Easier

By Ramona Creel

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As a Professional Organizers, I teach my clients how to stay on top of their daily “to-do’s.” Phone calls, e-mails, paperwork, mass mailings -- how do you keep things from falling between the cracks? Here are ten simple suggestions for keeping your own business affairs -- your administrative duties -- from taking any more time out of your day than they need to:

SET ASIDE ADMINISTRATIVE TIME

The first thing I ask my clients who are trying to regain control over work responsibilities is, “Do you set aside regular time to take care of phone calls, marketing, paperwork, client follow-up, e-mails, etc?” And the same is true for you -- if you want to get the job done, you have to MAKE TIME for it. I set aside one entire day a week for “office” work – no appointments, no client, nothing but catching up and planning ahead. If you try to squeeze administrative work in between client appointments, you will find that you are always falling behind.

RECOGNIZE A PRIORITY

All business people fall prey to a common but destructive behavior -- avoiding necessary but unpleasant activities (usually office work) in favor of the fun stuff (whatever you started your business to do in the first place!) We manage to stay really busy during the work day -- but crossing a lot of “to-do’s” off your list doesn’t necessarily mean that you are focusing on activities that will sustain your business. Although sending out mass mailings or making marketing calls or entering contact information into a database may not be exciting, these must be considered priorities if you want to stay in business.

USE TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL

As a business person, you have two choices -- join the 21st century or get left behind! You can’t even begin to claim that you are working efficiently if you’re not taking advantage of the technological advances available to you. That doesn’t mean that you have to walk around with a cell phone sticking out of your ear! But fax machines, word processing programs, e-mail, databases, and desktop publishing can make business administration more automated, less time-consuming, and much, much easier.

BUT DON’T LET TECHNOLOGY RULE YOUR LIFE

However, we strive for moderation in all things! If your technology causes you stress, you might

want to rethink your business strategy. You don't have to check your e-mail 15 times in an hour, you don't have to be reachable 24 hours a day, and you can let your calls go to voice mail without burning in hell. When technology turns from a friend to a foe, find some new friends!

CONSOLIDATE YOUR ACTIVITIES

One of the least efficient ways to spend your "admin time" is hopping back and forth between different activities. Doing a lot of one thing at one time helps you get into a "groove" -- you become more FOCUSED and tend to get more accomplished in a shorter time. Make a bunch of phone calls at once, then send out all of your letters, then spend a chunk of time on data entry. You will work faster and experience less transition time switching between "to-do's."

DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK FOR HELP

Being organized doesn't mean that you are superhuman. You can't always do everything yourself -- no matter how "together" you are! As a business person, you should consider assembling a team of professionals who can help with your routine administrative duties -- an accountant or bookkeeper, a database manager, even a contract administrative assistant -- whatever you need to get the job done.

CREATE A "NOT-TO-DO" LIST

You got into business to serve your clients -- not to send out letters or enter phone numbers into your computer. Think about the administrative duties that you don't enjoy or have no talent for or that take you away from your clients. Is it the BEST USE of your time for you to handle these jobs? Can you outsource some of this work? Can you get someone else to take over these responsibilities?

STRUCTURE YOUR ADMIN TIME

How much administrative time have you wasted saying (or thinking) "What should I do next?" Your office days should become almost routine -- where you go through the same steps and take care of the same responsibilities in the same order. Maybe you start out by returning e-mails in the morning, then make phone calls just before lunch, then spend the afternoon on your current marketing project. You choose the structure according to your work style and priorities, but use this schedule as a framework for creating effective "office" time.

PLAN AHEAD

Just knowing how you will subdivide your day isn't enough. You should have a list of specific administrative tasks that you plan tackle during office hours. Who will you call? What letters will you send? What web pages will you update? Then plug those "to-do" lists into your schedule for the day. You will avoid the "I know I have plenty to do but can't think of what" syndrome that seems to crop up so often!

TAKE THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

In the words of Barbara Sarah, "We get no extra credit for laboring under a hot summer sun on a job that can be done in the shade." In lay terms, don't overdo it -- you'll wear yourself out and grow to hate admin work. Will sending out a quarterly newsletter achieve the same results as a monthly one? Do you need to record every single contact with a client, or just the pivotal ones? Do you need to enter every business card you pick up in your database, or only the people you have relationships with? Quite often, good enough is GOOD ENOUGH -- no matter what the sales training courses tell

you!

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Ramona Creel is a Professional Organizer and the founder of OnlineOrganizing.com -- a web-based one-stop shop offering everything that you need to get organized at home or at work. At OnlineOrganizing.com, you may get a referral to an organizer near you, shop for the latest organizing products, get tons of free tips, and even learn how to become a professional organizer or build your existing organizing business. And if you would like to read more articles about organizing your life or building your business, get a free subscription to the "Get Organized" and "Organized For A Living" newsletters. Please visit <http://www.onlineorganizing.com> or contact Ramona directly at <mailto:ramona@onlineorganizing.com> for more information.

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