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Our mission is to provide information and strategies to business owners and managers for improvement in the effectiveness of its business management so that key objectives can be realized.



Maximize Efficiency by Clearing the Clutter

Ever visited a company that seemed to be drowning in paper, files, magazines, books and various other collectibles? Have you ever noticed how the employees also seemed to move more slowly? Think more slowly? Respond more slowly?

Accumulation is a problem in America today. From our homes to our cars to yes, our workplace, we are a society inundated by paper, things and information.

Information comes to us in many ways—email, snail mail, magazines, books, and through the internet. We have lists galore—favorites (for Web sites), to do, to read, to call, to plan, to someday do.

And, what does all of this give us? Overload. It's too much! It dulls the senses. It clutters the mind. It clutters the workplace. It clogs creativity. And, worse, it costs time, lost energy, lost inspiration and is an advocate for lower standards.

If your company's workplace is in need of a workplace clean up, ask yourself these questions:

- Does each and every person know the reason for each stack in the office?
- Do files go missing? Does it take more than one person to find them?
- Are company documents frequently found in a place where there is not supposed to be?
- Is dust collecting on outdated bulletin boards or materials in the lobby?
- Are the piles around the office not noticeable because you have gotten used to them being there?
- Has it been more than six months since your last clean up?

Several steps make the clean up process.

Step 1 – Clear away the old. First and foremost, it is important to clear away everything that is serving as a lag on the ship. Discard old magazines, books and articles, unless you have a company library, and in this case, return these items to their spot. If the items are more than six months old, the information is likely out of date or can be located on the internet.

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Step 2 – Return items to their place. Similar to clearing away the old, this step is all about returning everything to its place. From files to tape dispensers to the stapler that was left in the conference room, everything in the office not used for work needs to return to its place.

Step 3 – Combine lists. Lists are important to have because they free the mind up to do other, more important things. However, having multiple lists in multiple locations, from a desk notepad to the computer isn't efficient. For those who are computer oriented, created a folder called "Lists." Then, create a document for each list. You may have one for clients, work, etc. For those who are more tactile, use one notebook and create a list for each topic on a separate page.

Step 4 – Implement necessary systems. After clearing away the old and returning items to their place, trends may be surfacing. Are things in disarray because a system needs to be put into place? Ask "why" questions to determine whether a system will alleviate the problem. Why do these documents end up in the wrong place? Why is the filing system not working? Why are we accepting this standard? Why does it happen over and over?

Office supply cabinets can become a graveyard for unused office supplies. Donate office supplies that are not likely to be used. Create an office supply order list for the person who orders office supplies to ensure those ordered will be used.

Step 5 – Develop a new workplace standard. After the clean up is complete, talk with employees about how they feel working in a more streamlined space. What's working? What do they need to stay clutter free? Establish standards for your company's workplace. For example, If an employee pulls a file and doesn't use it for two days, return it to the file room. Or, If an employee has a routed magazine for more than a week, send it on to the next person. These standards place an expectation on the surrounding objects.

Establishing standards for a company workplace takes the organization to a new level. No longer are multiple coffee cups, overflowing magazine stacks and dusty cubicles acceptable. Pride replaces mediocrity and a clean workplace turns into a more efficient workplace.

With flu season right around the corner, this may well be the best time to "clean up." For more help with streamlining office systems, give us a call. We can show you how to measure increases in staff productivity. ■