
Organizing Your Day For Success

ORGANIZING YOUR DAY FOR SUCCESS

by Kathleen Gage

Whether you work for yourself or work for someone else, the perception others have of your level of professionalism will be determined by how organized you are. People who are most productive are those who stay organized. To get full value from your day it helps to have a system in place. The following are some guidelines to make the most of your time.

1. **SET PRIORITIES.** Look at all you need to accomplish and determine what you must handle, what you can delegate and what you can eliminate as an unnecessary task.
2. **WRITE A DAILY TO DO LIST.** This will be one of the biggest time savers you can implement. It is amazing how many people do not write a to do list. There may be a number of items they forget they needed to do during the day by not writing them down. The best way to use a to do list is keep a piece of paper, or a small tape recorder handy. As you think of things you must accomplish write them down or record them. About fifteen minutes before you are going to end your work day organize all the items you wrote or recorded on your following day's to do list. The next morning review your list and determine the order of importance for each item.
3. **GROUP YOUR ACTIVITIES TOGETHER.** As you review your to do list allow blocks of

times for similar items. If you have several phone calls to make do them in a block of time. If you know you will be mailing things, mail them all at once, rather than making several trips to the post office or the mail room. When you have errands to run plan out the most direct route for taking care of the tasks. What some people do is haphazardly take care of their errands and end up wasting time by backtracking several times.

4. **HANDLING PAPERWORK.** When paperwork comes across your desk, decide immediately what you will do with it. With much of what you get you will want to throw it out right away. Or you may want to delegate the paperwork to someone else if they are more qualified to handle it than you. You may want to file it away or respond to it. If there are several pieces you must respond to what works nicely is to put them in a folder marked "awaiting responses" and again block out a period of time to do all your responses at once.
5. **COLOR FILE FOLDERS.** You will save a substantial amount of time by blocking out categories in your file system by color. Rather than searching through dozens, or hundreds, of manila colored folders you have only a few to look at based on the color of the category. For example, you may want to put all financial information in green folders. Urgent client folders in the red category. Travel information in the yellow folders. You decide what colors will best serve you.

6. **KEEP UP ON YOUR FILING.** Do not let it pile up. A great deal of time is wasted by people who have papers stacked on their desk waiting to be filed. If someone requests a document that is somewhere in the pile of papers waiting to be filed you are not being very productive in your search. You are wasting precious time - theirs and yours. When everything is filed in an organized fashion it will be so much easier to find a document within moments of needing it.
7. **ORGANIZE YOUR EMAIL PROCESS.** Unless absolutely necessary, resist the temptation to check your email several times a day. It would be like calling the post office throughout the day to see if you got another piece of mail. In most cases, checking once in the morning and once in the afternoon should be enough. (Depending on the nature of your business or industry it may be necessary to check more frequently). Delete any messages you can and respond immediately to those requiring a response. If you need to save a message you may want to transfer it into a word processing file. That way you don't have to keep pulling up that message when you check for new messages.
8. **EMAIL DISTRIBUTION LISTS.** If you have a distribution list where you send out mass mailings via email put the addresses in alphabetical order. That way when you get a message back indicating some addresses are no longer deliverable you don't have to waste precious time searching for those addresses. You simply go to it like you would any other alphabetized address in your database. When sending out a message to several people do a blind cc. That way you are not wasting your readers time by them having to scroll down to get to the main part of your message. You will also be respecting the privacy of all people on

your list and not giving others the opportunity to spam.

With some people, it will take time to develop the habit of being truly organized. However, with good organization skills you will be amazed at how much you can accomplish in any given day.

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