

ARE YOU EXPERIENCING INFORMATION OVERLOAD?

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Information is coming to us in all directions; e-mail, voicemail, regular mail, cellular phones, answering machines, television, verbal requests - how does one process so much information?

We receive more mail in one month than our parents received in one year and more mail in one year than our grandparents received in their lifetime and this doesn't include voice mail, answering machines or e-mails on the computer.

You are not alone in facing the information challenges of today, but if you develop and utilize organizational skills you will enhance productivity, decrease wasted time, and reduce stress levels for a more efficient and enjoyable way of life.

1. 80% of medical expenditures are now related to stress.
2. 80% of what we file in a filing cabinet or electronically on our computer will never be reviewed again.
3. The average employee today has about 37 hours of unfinished work on his or her desk at one time.
4. Paper usage is growing 6 to 8% each year. The number of pages printed between 1995 and 2005 has doubled.
5. 49% of managers feel they are often unable to handle the volumes of information they must deal with.
6. 38% stay that they waste substantial amounts of time trying to locate information.
7. 47% say the collection of information is so overwhelming

that it distracts from their main job responsibilities.

8. Executives waste six weeks per year searching for lost documents.
9. 65% of people described themselves as "very" or "insanely" busy.

The end result for many individuals becomes a state of confusion and information overload. Physiologically, one may experience an increase in heart rate, respiratory rate, and an increase in blood pressure. Psychologically, one may experience an increase in anxiety and frustration. A cluttered environment may also represent postponed decisions and a cluttered mind. Other ineffective responses include work overload, procrastination, over-eating, over-drinking, speeding up or actually giving up. One natural response is to speed up in order to get everything accomplished quickly, a situation which leads to the depletion of your own energy. Productivity decreases while frustration levels increase, leading to dissatisfied employees and employers.

What to do about it? Well first, take a deep breath and slow down. Simplify overwhelming projects into smaller segments which will allow the project to pull together for a successful end result. It becomes important when working on any project to develop learning skills that focus on "how" and "what" you are going to successfully accomplish. Clarity is the antidote to information overload and confusion.

In the work environment today, we find companies requesting individuals to take on more responsibility and to become more organized. However, most individuals have never been taught how to organize. Executives, managers, and other team members want to do a good job for their employers; however, lack of organizing skills may be one of the interfering factors. It is important not to set your employees up for failure. Companies who recognize the importance of their employees are willing to provide professional assistance with strategies, structure and support so that employees can feel and experience success. More employers observe an increase in productivity when a clear message of passion is present in the work environment. Balancing the desire to achieve success in your work environment and to enjoy your life outside of work is critical to having a successful work and home life.

Organizing is all about maximizing efficiency in a systematic, productive way so as to enhance the quality of life. Anyone can help an individual organize an office, corporation or a home; however, organization is about individuals changing work habits and other contributing factors that create disorganization. Let's review six aspects that contribute to disorganization.

1. Incoming items: Email, voice mail, regular mail, daily interruptions. How many emails do you have in your inbox? I have worked with clients with 1500 to 1700 emails in their inbox. It is nearly impossible to find one document quickly when you are scrolling through that many emails. Create electronic folders to file emails for future reference such as the name of a person, name of a project or a "read" folder. Apply the 2-minute

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rule if possible. If you can take the necessary action in 2 minutes, complete the task then place the completed information in an electronic folder. Email was designed for short, quick communications therefore; your goal should be to keep your in-box empty. Remember, 80% of what we file will never get reviewed again.

2. **Prioritizing:** Work loads can be more manageable when assigning a time frame to get the task accomplished. Develop a filing system which range from 1-31 days. An individual can then identify what projects need the most attention on a particular day of the month. This will also allow you to get rid of the "To Do" lists that never seem to get smaller. At the end of your work day look at the file containing tasks for the following day and place the highest priority project first. Prioritizing in this way will allow you to focus, concentrate and be more productive on any given day.

3. **Time Management:** 80 percent of your work can get accomplished in 20 percent of your time when you focus and concentrate on the task before you. The key, for most individuals, is to focus and concentrate the first thing in the morning. 20 percent of an 8 hour day constitutes 96 minutes. Therefore, upon arrival at work, obtain the daily file with the tasks that you prioritized the night before, then begin focusing and concentrating on those projects for 96 minutes without interruption.

4. **Project Management:** One must be clear on the objectives that need to be accomplished while working on projects. More time is wasted on long meetings and team members not completing their assignments prior to the next scheduled meeting. All team members, therefore, must be responsible with clear expectations, deadlines, and outcome measurements.

5. **Personality Management:** Do you have the right person for the right job? Discover the talents of your employees and utilize their talents to obtain the best results for an assigned project.

6. **Accountability Management:** This is an essential tool for any organization. Those organizations in which there is no authority or no accountability in terms of responsibility, experiences chaos, decreased productivity and increases in operational cost. Items that need to be included in developing accountability management consist of the following: Job descriptions, documented reporting systems, clear expectations and a complete feed-back loop to all individuals involved in a project, or department. A successful management team will develop a two way communication strategy between management and employees. Possible self-realizations often seen upon becoming more organized include:

1. Creation of clear vision: Ability to see clearly what actions need to take place in the work or home environment.
2. An increase in the ability to be a visionary.
3. An increase in the ability to delegate.
4. An increase in the ability to prioritize.
5. Discipline: Through discipline one will obtain freedom.
6. Manipulation of time creates a better resource of energy.
7. Time enhancement increases efficiency.
8. An increase in internal strength and peace.

Here's a healthy approach to organizing your personal or professional life: Design YOUR vision, Eliminate YOUR obstacles, Commit YOUR resources, Select YOUR tools, Maintain YOUR success. Utilizing organizational skills will enhance productivity; decrease time spent looking for documents, and reduces stress levels for a more efficient organization. Organizing is all about maximizing efficiency in a systematic, productive way to enhance the quality of life.

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