

6 Steps to a Clutter-free Computer and a More Productive You

By Pat Heydlauff

According to the National Association of Professional Organizations, research shows a direct correlation between productivity and clutter. When clutter and chaos are on the rise, profits and productivity decline.

While the mantra of the day may be "go paperless" that doesn't mean your computer should take over your life, become electronic clutter and take control of your time while you become less efficient, effective and productive.

A clutter-free desktop reduces stress and frustration while increasing concentration and creative thinking. The same rule applies to the information in your computer. Too much inaccessible information helps add to the stress of the daily grind. "Go paperless" to help the environment but if you want to be more successful, also "go clutter-free" on your computer.

Just Do It

Begin today to take back control from your computer and implement your "**more productive you**" plan. It will soon become a personal habit if you un-clutter and organize on a weekly basis.

Step 1 – Make an appointment with yourself - set aside time weekly to manage, delete and organize electronic information. Do you really need to save emails from three years ago that are no longer relevant? On the other hand, are your file folders full of stuff six years old that are totally irrelevant to your life today? Get rid of them. Make a commitment to yourself to honor your appointment with you and you will get and stay in-control of instant electronic clutter.

Step 2 - Organize and unclutter your desktop so at least 80 percent of the desktop is visible at all times. Always repeat this process at the end of the day. This will make going to work each morning a joy because you will decrease desktop stress, which contributes to mental overload and will increase your productivity. Remember, your desktop is the first thing you see when you open your computer and the last thing you see at the end of the day. If it is cluttered and un-organized, it sets the tone for more chaos and less productivity. Eliminate anything on your desktop that is not used often.

Step 3 – Next, organize your desktop so everything is easily accessible. You might put all of your social media links on the right side and your working programs and folders on the left. Eliminate the duplicates. Do you really need three places from which to access the internet? Try using the great colorful folders that are available as a download to organize important programs or projects. According to Feng Shui principles, use color to enhance various areas of your life. Use the green folders for new clients, new business and growth; the red folders for good luck or for established clients that provide you

continued business; and the yellow folders for less important but still necessary information. Let your creative juices flow instead of allowing your computer to control you. You will reduce fatigue and increase your efficiency.

Step 4 – Your screensaver or desktop background also provides you either positive supportive energy or can add to the clutter by providing you negative or stressful energy. The more neutral and calm the background the more productive, efficient and effective you will be. Think color not electronic technology when you choose your background. If you work in a high-tech environment and your screensaver is high-tech, your day will be filled with more stress. A peace-filled landscape (or lots of green) or a gentle water scene or the color blue would serve to keep you much calmer and productive. If your computer is in an area where you feel like you are about to fall asleep cheer up and brighten up the colors to provide you more energy. Determine what works best for you and you will stay focused on the work at hand.

Step 5 – Move on and organize and/or eliminate the folders inside your computer. Do you save everything you create into folders in your My Documents folder or are they just stashed somewhere but you are not really sure where or how to access them at a moments notice? If you use your My Documents folder, have you organized it so there are no duplicates or several files that have different names but should be together in one folder? The old adage "time is money" really applies here. If you can't find it you become less efficient and productive perhaps losing a customer, a sale or the last chapter of a book you thought you finished two months ago. Organizing makes information more accessible and you more efficient and eliminating the clutter makes your computer more efficient.

Step 6 – Stop being a slave to your email inbox. Make a decision right now that nothing is more important than being in-control of your time and productivity. Turn off the sound on your email inbox so it isn't a distraction and doesn't scream at you with urgency. Remove yourself from all email lists, newsletters and catalogues that you might look at once a month only if you have time. You can always access them by bookmarking their site and going there only if and when you want to. Notify everyone that you will be checking your inbox only twice daily, late in the morning and late afternoon and will respond promptly. Moreover, be sure to handle email information only once. Read it and take action then file it or delete it. This will increase your productivity and limit unimportant email interruptions.

Once you have devised your "more productive you" plan and put your plan into action, you must focus energy onto it regularly to keep it operating smoothly. This isn't a one time clear away the clutter plan but a system to help you stay in-control of the barrage or screaming and streaming instant electronic communications and information.

The result, you've helped the environment by going paperless and have regained control over your time and your information so you can be more efficient, effective and productive.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pat Heydlauff, president of Energy Design, uses Feng Shui design principles to eliminate chaos and stress at home and within oneself. More than a Feng Shui expert, Pat is a consultant and speaker who helps remove clutter and negativity while encouraging personal growth, improved relationships and prosperity. Her book, "Feng Shui: So Easy a Child Can Do It," shows how small changes can lead to a big improvement in one's personal and professional success. For information on her consulting, speaking and artwork, visit: www.Energy-by-Design.com or call: 561-799-3443.