

Three Ways to Increase Efficiency

By Pat Heydlauff, Feng Shui Expert

There is a lot of research showing a direct correlation between productivity and clutter, otherwise known as “stuff.” Personal efficiency, effectiveness and productivity decline when clutter and chaos are on the rise. Do piles of paper, stacks of stuff, disorganization and information mismanagement take over your home and workplace while efficiency, effectiveness and personal joy vanish right before your eyes?

The National Association of Professional Organizations says paper clutter is the number one problem for most businesses. Studies show the average person wastes 4.3 hours per week searching for papers and things, adding stress and frustration to their lives while reducing concentration and creative thinking. And, according to research, the biggest burden for small businesses and people who work from home offices is the inability to properly service customers, increase sales and improve bottom-line profits because of mishandled paperwork and clutter.

Unfortunately clutter adds to the stress of the daily grind. Statistics show 75 percent or more of all physician visits are stress related, and by un-cluttering and organizing, you will not only increase productivity, efficiency and effectiveness but reduce overall stress and medical care costs.

Think Big

Whether you are working in a huge corporation, a one-person office or your home, there are several benefits to un-cluttering and organizing:

- Increased productivity and decreased costs
- Reduced mental overload and stress
- Reduced accidents and spills
- Saved time and improved effectiveness
- Increased self-satisfaction and improved self-motivation

Your first step is to devise an *information and clutter management system*, not just a filing and storage system. Information and clutter comes in or from many sources, including snail mail, e-mail, text messages, cell phones, storage containers, closets and courier services, to name a few.

All of this information and clutter needs to be organized in order to be effectively utilized, put into permanent containers or locations for storage and/or tossed. If you are not using it or will not need it in the future, get rid of it.

You also need to have the necessary tools to make the system efficient and uniformly useable such as file folders, filing cabinets for current information, storage boxes, closets or storage areas, containers for archives and heirlooms, and scanners with backup capabilities for managing information electronically.

Start Now

Whether you are responsible for creating your own information management system in your home or office, or if those higher up are in charge, it's still up to you to take action and make it happen. Below are some steps to follow for your office but can also be easily applied to your home, especially the closets, the kitchen and bathrooms:

- Set aside time weekly to manage and organize information and clutter. Adhere to that commitment like an appointment on your calendar and you will stay ahead of the game.
- Always organize your desk at the end of the day, so at least 80 percent of the desktop is visible. This will make going to work each morning a joy because desk stress and mental overload will decrease while your productivity increases.
- Eliminate anything on top of your desk that is not used often. Put everything else into drawers, cubicles or containers that are easily accessible. Your efficiency will double and your fatigue will decrease.
- Limit yourself to only one personal photograph, placing it in the southwest section of your work area to energize relationships. This will increase focus on the work at hand not others.
- If you need to access files at a moment's notice or need a reminder to follow up on specific projects regularly, use a system such as a vertical desktop file sorter instead of stacks, and color-code them. Use green folders for new clients, red folders for established clients that provide you good business and good fortune, and yellow folders for less important but still necessary information. You or colleagues can quickly find client information, which improves client relations and results.
- Handle information and clutter only once whether on paper or in your e-mail inbox. Make a decision as to whether it takes action or can be tossed or deleted. You will become more efficient and lower your stress levels.
- Think of stacks of clutter and paper as a postponed decision. Decide what to do with it the first time you handle it. You will save time, be more efficient and effective.

Sustain Your Information and Clutter Management System

Once you have devised your *information and clutter management system* and put your plan into action, you must focus energy onto it to keep it operating smoothly on a daily basis. It won't become part of your business culture or a personal habit if you don't do more than just un-clutter and organize once or twice.

- Create a Clutter-free Workspace Policy, and establish a reward system that works for you. When you become more efficient and effective you also find more time to do some of the things you really want to do in your life.
- Create an Intentions Board with pictures and words that reflect a clutter-free organized efficient workspace for you to create in. You will definitely improve your outlook on life and increase your motivation.
- Put one personal, creative item on your desk, where stacks of paper used to be. This will serve as a reminder of how easy it is to stay clutter-free and stress-free.

Whether you are working with a corporate budget or a household one, stress, clutter and disorganization cost thousands of dollars in wasted productivity and increased

stress. By creating a plan to stay organized, and implementing these tips on a regular basis, you can reap the benefits and will be happier and healthier.

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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 new 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.