

Quick Guide: New year? Take Control!

January always makes me feel that I should be sorting out my life! Sounds a bit dramatic I know and a mammoth task to achieve, so I thought I would start with taking control of my paperwork and re-introducing a few de-cluttering principles. Here are my **top ten tips**; I hope they help you too! First of all, to take control of paperwork and emails, apply the 5D Approach:

- 1. Ditch it** - Ask yourself 'Do I really want this at all?' If not, ditch it straight away. Don't put it on one side thinking 'I'll look at that later'. You won't! Most information has a limited shelf life, so a useful rule of thumb is – if it doesn't seem valuable today it isn't likely to tomorrow.
- 2. Deal with it** – If you are able to deal with it quickly and effectively as soon as it arrives then do so. It can be satisfying and stress-relieving to action documents immediately. If you leave it, then you will have to spend time refreshing your memory about the action decided earlier.
- 3. Determine future action** - Try to touch the paper document or email once and determine future action. On the paper document, make a note of the action required and date for completion, put into 'bring forward' system, and make a note in the diary. With emails, use the 'flag for follow-up' facility in Outlook You may also want to add a comment to the email to assist you in dealing with it when the time comes. Then place it in an appropriate folder.
- 4. Direct it** - Don't send information to others just to get it off your desk or out of your inbox. Why are you redirecting it? What do you want them to do with it? Explain this in a brief note; it will help them to understand why they now have it and help them act on it more quickly if necessary.
- 5. Deposit it** – Only store in a filing system if you know you or somebody else will need to refer to it later. Think carefully about where to file it. **Plus, a couple more tips to help you take control:**
- 6. Set your watch five minutes fast** so you always arrive a couple of minutes early for events – this looks impressive.
- 7. Be strict with time.** Allocate time limits to complete tasks. Then stick to them.
- 8. Build in a time buffer** for tasks so you don't put yourself under pressure.
- 9. Complete tomorrow's To Do list** at the end of each day. You will then be able to leave the office and forget about work. Then when you come in the next day you will be able to start work immediately – you will feel so much more motivated.
- 10.** Finally, have a happy, in control start to 2010 and feel better.

Compiled by Judith Di-Castri