Quick Guide: Time to De-Clutter

Christmas is coming and often it can become less busy in the office. If you find time on your hands, take the opportunity to have a de-clutter so you can start the new year all tidy and organised! Here are the top ten tips to help you de-clutter your cupboards, filling cabinets and around your desk area.

1.   **Ditch ... ditch ... ditch.** I bet if you just have a look around you can very quickly just ditch lots of unwanted paperwork that you've been hoarding. Once you've had this initial sweep, and feel motivated to continue, you can then begin - in a more methodical way - to clear the clutter.

2.   **Organise cupboards, drawers and bookcases**. These are all handy hiding places for dumping things. By ruthlessly clearing cupboards and drawers first, you will free up space so that you can then clear clutter from your desk.

3.   **Check filing systems**. Are they as systematic as you would like them? Are they easy to use by you and others? Perhaps you even inherited them and really want to re-organise them to make filing easier?

4.   **Collect up all the piles of paper into one big pile**. Then start to sort through this. Do not create others piles but tidy and file as you go.

5.   **Apply the 5D Approach** that we promote on our courses: Ditch it, Deal with it, Determine future action, Direct it or Deposit it.

6.   **Only have in your in-tray what you are planning to do that day**. Everything else should be in your 'bring forward' system or filed. You could have a pending tray for items awaiting further information or action later that day but time management purists would say all this extra paper should be filed in a bring forward system.

7.   **Create a 'reading' file** of information that you wish to read. But also allocate time in your diary to do this. Don't keep the whole magazine or document – just the pages you are going to read. Date them and if you haven't read them within a month ditch them!

8.   **Don't collect paper and don't file hard copies of information already stored on computer**. Ensure a sensible directory structure for your computer files with reliable back-up. It is quicker to do, easier to find and amend, and takes up less room.

9.   **Don't file material which is readily available from other sources** such as the originator of the document, central archives, internet reference sources.

10.   **Build up good filing habits**. Spending a little time regularly is much less of a chore than trying to wade through a large pile of documents for filing. **Aim to file daily wherever possible.**

I hope these tips help. Believe me, if you only do one or two of them you will be on the way to recovery and a clear new year. Happy Christmas!

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