

GET A JUMP START ON THE NEW YEAR

December is often a slow business month due to end of the year budget concerns and the extended holiday period. So use that down time to get yourself ready for 2010 by cleaning out, organizing, and re-stocking your office. You accomplish a task you keep putting off because you are too busy, it is a very productive use of your time, and you enter the New Year ready to do business!

1. **Clean out your files and paper stacks.** Get a bin for trash and one for recycling and ruthlessly pare down or discard completely. (An easy way to "green" your business is to give already-used paper another life by using the other side for notes and drafts.)
2. **If it's broken, toss it. If it's missing parts, toss it.** If it is broken, but can be fixed easily, give yourself a small amount of time to get it repaired – like one week. If you don't make the appropriate repairs, get rid of it. If you don't have the missing parts, you are unlikely to find or replace them (unless it is an expensive item). Toss it.
3. **If you don't use it, you don't need it.** If it is a usable item, donate it for a two-way reward – you will gain more space and someone else will be able to use it (and you may get a tax deduction). If an item has nostalgic value, then find a way to use it. A relative's coffee cup can become a pen holder or pottery from a vacation can hold business cards or office supplies.
4. **Organize business cards you have accumulated.** Whether you scan or enter them in an electronic file, keep them in a rolodex, or just rubber band them in a pile on your desk, now is the time to sort through the cards, decide which to keep, and file.
5. **Inventory your office supplies.** First rule - throw away all non-working pens! Office supply stores, like every retailer in December, have items on sale all month. Get all the supplies you need--paper, stamps, paper clips, file folders, printer cartridges—and consider purchasing furniture and equipment now if you need them. (*Tip: Office Depot sells sheets and rolls of stamps at the register*)
6. **Choose one or two business goals you want to accomplish this year.** Maybe it is to make more money, gain more clients, or find a new business niche. Write each in a clear sentence, and be specific on how you will accomplish the goal(s). Then post the goal(s) in a visible place in your office so you stay focused throughout the year.

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