

## **NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION: GET ORGANIZED**

A survey was done recently where more than 300,000 respondents revealed their top New Year's resolutions. As you would expect, 'lose weight', 'reduce stress', and 'spend quality time with family and friends' were some of the most popular ones, but one of the Top 10 resolutions was 'get organized'.

To accomplish any goal you must have specific things you are going to do. To lose weight you could walk 30 minutes and eat 1000 calories each day. To reduce stress you might do yoga every morning and deep breathing exercises in the afternoon. To get organized you create an efficient work space and find systems to manage your data.

### **1. Office Layout and Equipment**

Do you have an assortment of furniture, old cabinets, broken drawers, plain folders, and an inefficient or unappealing setup? Don't let your environment sabotage your productivity and drain your creativity. Have often-used files and the printer within reach, pens/paper clips/stapler handy, and a well-lit, aesthetically pleasing office space. There are many inexpensive solutions at stores like Target, Pier 1, and Home Goods as well as office supply stores. You don't have to buy standard 'office' furniture and supplies; if items fit your needs and you like the look, then it works for you.

### **2. Paper and Information Management**

Do you let dishes pile up in the sink until they start to topple over to the floor? Do you wait until all your clothes are dirty before you wash anything? Probably not, but a lot of people treat their paperwork and e-mails that way. It is going to keep coming - probably faster than dirty dishes and clothes - so you have to manage your physical and computer Inboxes and have an efficient filing system. No one wants to do it, but the alternative is even worse: you can't find anything easily, or maybe not at all, because it's in a big pile or you don't know where (or if) you filed it.

### **3. Contact Management System**

Are your contacts a combination of names on scraps of paper, rubber-banded stacks of business cards, a computer address book, a paper address book, and sheets of scribbled notes? You have to have one place you put all your contacts so you have one source you check for information and use for mailings. In today's world, it has to be electronic so you can create e-mail distribution lists, labels and letters for mailings, and sub-groups for targeted marketing.

Does it still seem too daunting to tackle one or all of these areas? One of the principles of good management is to delegate whenever possible. So, look into outsourcing tasks as it makes sense for your budget. Most people have personal tasks such as oil changes, housecleaning, yard work, and car washes done by others. Office tasks are no different and can affect your bottom line even more. You probably already use an accountant to prepare your taxes and IT people to maintain your website. Perhaps an office assistant can organize a filing system, sort papers, or enter contact information in a database. Or you can hire a virtual assistant or professional organizer for specific jobs. If a task needs to get done and you can't/don't want to/don't have time, then find someone who can and get on with your more organized and productive life!