

Taking Care of Business: The Clutter Curse & Cure



The fastest and most cost-effective way to raise the energies in any environment is to clear the clutter. Clutter is defined as anything that causes disorder or confusion. All the things in your work environment affect not only you, but also other employees, clients and the business itself. If your

business is awash in disorder and confusion, then your business is losing money.

Most people don't really *see* clutter until it stops them from completing a task. When they can't find a pen, document or product, business stops until it is located. How many times a day this happens adds up quickly. To keep the flow of cash and energy moving freely into your place of business, be aware of clutter everywhere and clear it regularly!

Everything you own is tied to you with a ribbon of energy. This includes everything that is considered to be under your control at work: all the things in your desk, your paper and computer files and even the space you occupy. As long as you have the job, you "own" everything involved in the process.

Consider for a moment just how many things you "own." How many things are on or in your desk or work space that are tied to you? If you were to leave, how many of these would you have to put in a box and take with you? If you were to be replaced, how many of these would have to be handed over to someone else to "own?" Every day you feed them your energy when you carry them around, move them, or step over and around them. They affect your job, your life and your world.

Got your imaginary adding machine handy? Open your middle desk drawer and pick a number out of thin air: how many single things are in that drawer? One hundred? Two? Five? Hold that number in your mind for a moment. Now pick a number for how many things are in each of your other drawers and add those into your total. Feel free to round to the zeroes.

Next add the number of things in the file cabinets and storage closets; your briefcase; wallet, purse and car. How many files do you have on your computer? Emails? Business cards in your Rolodex or names in your address book? If you're the boss, how many employees do you have in how many locations that are tied to you? How many projects do you have going? How many thoughts run through your head during any given drive home? How many spouses, kids, relatives and friends? How many organizations are you involved with? Are you in the tens of thousands or have you gone beyond six digits already? Consider that you "own" *lots* more than the things at your place of business. There is also all the stuff you own at home or in storage. Just the sheer number of things can be staggering. And every single one of them takes a little piece of your energy called "ownership." Is it any wonder you're tired all the time? If you want to free up some energy, drop some of the load you're carrying and get rid of the clutter at your job.

To cure the clutter curse in your business environment, start with what you can control and think baby steps. Look around with fresh eyes as if you were a customer coming in for the first time or as if your boss was evaluating your performance. What needs to be cleaned up, wiped down, put away, or thrown out? Take the initiative to do what you can to improve the situation one step at a time. You can easily make a bigger state of disorder and confusion, so start with a small task, experience success and then move on to the next one. Your efforts will add up.

These guidelines will help you begin. You've read them before; you'll see them again. Start with the first thing you look up and see. Consider:

- 1) Do you use it regularly?
- 2) Is it in good working order?
- 3) Is it clean?
- 4) Is it safe?

If the answer to any of these questions is *no*, pitch it, fix it, clean it, or get rid of it. Don't make yourself crazy. Try to handle each piece of clutter only *once*.

Minimize the items on your desktop and in drawers. Sit back and look at what you've kept and then minimize some more. Keep one or two of what you need and put the extras away in a storage area, out of your field of "ownership." All the stuff in your drawers, file cabinets and closets not touched in over two years has

become clutter. File what you need to keep and throw out the rest. Allow one project at a time on your desk. Just clearing your desk will immediately change your outlook. Try it and see for yourself!

One at a time, clean out your file cabinets, bookshelves and credenza. Then go to work on your computer and clear the virtual clutter. Get your documents organized, clean out your email, delete any software you haven't used in two years. Empty the trash - both virtual and real. Clean the surfaces of the furniture and any equipment you use. Clean your phone and update your voicemail message. Your equipment will work more efficiently and so will you.

Store rooms are often dark, crowded dumping grounds. Walkways are often blocked, rats' nests are common - literally and figuratively, and fire hazards abound. If you'd be mortified for a client to see your storage area, make it your business to clean it up, make it safe, attractive and comfortable.

Clear clutter in your briefcase, wallet and purse. Then wipe them down and polish them up. Clear clutter in your car: glove compartment, under seats, in the trunk, above the visors. Then get it washed and waxed. Clearing clutter literally lightens your load and energizes you and your environment. Taking good care of your belongings will promote self-esteem and positive change.

Visualize coming to work and finding your station cleared and organized. Your perception of your workload that day will be different. Because your space seems to be under control you will handle things differently: calmly and with confidence, rather than feeling overwhelmed or frustrated. Your positive interaction with your clients will be more comfortable for both them and you. They will be more likely to return if their experience is positive. *Cha-ching!*

Spring cleanings aren't just for Spring. With the change of every season, check your environment again for trash, grime and disorder. Clutter stops business from moving forward just like a car wreck stops morning traffic. Take control, set yourself free and watch your business energy and cash flow increase. Less clutter and confusion means more focus and organization, happier clients and employees, and saved time and money. That's a win-win-win situation.

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Next Week: *Open for Business - Your Entrance*

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