

HOW TO ORGANISE YOUR EMAILS

Whether overwhelmed by piles of papers and files everywhere or an email inbox woefully exceeding capacity, a few simple strategies can help you take control of the information overload that bombards you every day.

Getting organized requires going through the four steps of (1) Purging, (2) Sorting, (3) Arranging and (4) Maintaining.

PURGE

Step One: Get rid of everything you do not need, want or use. Do not keep anything that is not current, necessary and used regularly. When managing information, learn to archive items that you need to keep, perhaps for legal or accounting purposes, but don't otherwise need to access on a regular basis. Delete any emails that you no longer need and shred documents that you do not use or need to archive.

SORT

Step Two: After you dispose of the trash, sort what remains. Sort your data into categories that make sense for your home or business. Set up folders in your email account to save important emails by category. Remember that you can create folders within folders for a deeper level of specificity. Always name the folder (or label the box/file for paper documents) with the contents and an expiration date. Most importantly - don't forget to backup your electronic files! The best system of folders can be erased in seconds with a hard drive crash.

ARRANGE

Step Three: Arranging means putting important items and files where they will be most useful. The area within arm's reach while sitting at your desk is the most valuable real estate in your office/home office. Likewise, the first few folders in your Inbox or shortcuts that reside on your PC desktop are prime locations. Files or messages that you refer to frequently, especially daily, should be kept close at hand.

A key to any filing system is to keep it simple but effective. Creating complex rules about color coding, naming, and sub-divisions will impede you from using the system long-term. If it is cumbersome to create new folders, you probably will just let the paperwork pile up in your inbox. Keep your system simple and manageable.

MAINTAIN

Step Four: Create systems that support your newly organized space, email, and files. Like gaining and losing weight, gaining clutter seems all too easy and losing it always a battle. By implementing structures that support your new system, you will be more likely to maintain the organization.

When it comes to email, creating rules to deal with email that you receive on a regular basis is critical to being organized. Use the Create Rule function (found in Microsoft Outlook and other email management software) to specify which folder email should go to whenever it is received from a particular sender or group of senders. Instead of manually moving the email to the appropriate folder, the software can manage the task for you.

Organization is a very personal process that requires regular maintenance and at times, expertise. When it comes to organizing or any of the tasks in business, it's important to recognize what you do well and what you do not. Hiring a professional to assist in tasks where you do not have expertise can help get the job accomplished quicker.

I hope these tips will help you get organized and gain control over your time. Keep in mind, the average person spends about an hour every day looking for things they cannot locate. That amounts to two weeks a year. What could you do with those two weeks?