

Productive to the Max

Productivity

Performance

Profitability

Organize all that Paper

MaxTips! March 2006

Has that paper in your office gotten out of hand? Do you need a helmet to enter the premises? Can you actually find anything under those piles? Follow these steps to create and maintain an organized paper environment

1. **Gather supplies.** Post-it notes, recycling bins, shredding containers, sharpie black fine-point markers, garbage cans, file folders, timer.
2. **Empty a small area.** Clean off a small area where you can at least sit down and place several piles of paper.
3. **Determine categories for your papers.** Make a list and keep it handy. You will sort your papers into the various categories or sections that you have determined. These may include some of the following:
 - TOSS* - guess where this goes?
 - UNSUBSCRIBE* - this is for publications or memos that you no longer want to receive. You will accumulate a pile of these. You can then plan time to cancel them at a later date.
 - TO DO* - these are papers that require further action
 - TO FILE* - for filing once your filing system is organized!
 - TO ENTER* - for business cards, contacts or information that needs to be entered into your address book, calendar or computer
 - TO OTHERS* - for papers that belong elsewhere
 - TO READ*
4. **Set your timer** for the amount of time you have allocated on your schedule for this task.
5. **Start with one pile of paper.** Stand or sit at the table to sort into the categories that you have created. Pick up one piece of paper Ask yourself the relevant questions to determine if you should keep this paper.
 - If you can TOSS it. Do so. Right into the recycling bins or garbage containers.
 - As you pick up each piece of paper, you will apply a post-it note stating which category the paper belongs to.
 - Place the papers in one pile.
 - Reward yourself! You have started the process of organizing your paper! Continue the process as you pick up each piece of paper until your time is up.

6. **Take the categorized pile of papers** with the post- it notes, and sort it alphabetically. You will find that your categories all come together.
7. **Place each of the stacks of categorized papers** in a file and place the post-it on the cover. Store in a safe place until next time.
8. **Plan** another date on your calendar to finish the rest of the piles in the box.
9. **Reward** yourself by going for a walk, eating a cookie or buying yourself a trinket.

Stay tuned for the next MaxTips for part 2 to complete the process.