

The paper menace

10 ways to win the paper chase.

By Elizabeth Lulu Miranda of Mercury Organizing Professionals www.mop-ds.com

Looking for information and not finding it when we need it is a big time waster. Paper management is the top complaint for most clients I work with. They admit having an overwhelming feeling that work is never done. Second, is not having enough time in the day to get things done.

You can be organizing daily and sorting paper till your fingers bleed but if you don't have a system to process through your paperwork then you'll always have that overwhelming feeling that you can't catch up. You don't have to own a business to feel this pain.

Take charge of that information overload because it won't stop until you decide it stops. Gaining control of the paperwork you are responsible for can be easily accomplished if you follow these suggestions.

1. Before you start going paperless. Its important to have a computer that can take on the load. Talk to your IT person before you follow any plan. **Back up your computer** as many times as you can afford. Burn CD's. Use www.carbonite.com or www.backblaze.com These are online back-up systems and can be scheduled to work while you sleep. Have an external hard drive connected to save your work daily.

2. Don't just manage your paperwork, its even better if you **don't get it mailed to you** in the first place. Cancel your catalogs; visit these stores online instead, make a request at stopjunkmail.org, download PaperKarma App to have them stop junkmail for you.

3. **Reducing your mail** and information intake is vital to your goal. Do this by having your bills, your bank statements and financial statements emailed to you instead of snail mail. Make financial transactions online. Many banks offer online bill paying services.

4. If you write documents don't print them out if you don't have to. Just think of all those drafts you create before the final. **Save your work**, label it appropriately. One example is to save your document as a .doc or .pdf and keep in an electronic folder.

5. Take all saved documents and folders in your computer **to the cloud**. A cloud is a service that holds your data online. I know of a few that offer limited data storage for free; like dropbox or MS Live.

6. Make time to **process your mail immediately** separate documents from envelopes.

7. **Recycle** envelopes as soon as you open them.

8. **Remove any shredding piles** to either shred yourself or take to locations that do this for you.

9. If something catches your interest and you want to read an article later then save it electronically instead of printing. **Bookmark it:** New Macs offer a nifty tab you press. It looks like a pair of reading glasses. It adds your link to a list. How cool is that? Another option is to send it to services like Evernote, Delicious, Diigo. Save your notes and lists in Evernote, or others like them.

10. **Pictures can be saved online** in Google's Picasa, or Yahoo's Flickr. and why not create a book of all your favorites to make as a keepsake.

Going green as well as reducing your paper piles is a great accomplishment. Doing so has to be planned so that you don't end missing your goal and give up. These simple tips are an example of a few online services that are not only time savers but are going to help you reduce your carbon footprint in your home.

Elizabeth Lulu Miranda
Mercury Organizing
Professionals
312-804-2111
www.mop-ds.com