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# Clear Your Clutter to Increase Personal Efficiency

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Millard MacAdam

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Uncertainties about what lies in store for us are magnified when we live and work in clutter which causes varying degrees of disarray in our lives.

Look around your office. Do you feel uncomfortable, a little stressed, and very frustrated by the disarray and clutter around you as you do your work? In clear view are there parts of different projects here and there on your desk, console and even on the floor under the consoles? Are unread magazines and newspaper clippings beginning to cascade out of your overflowing basket? Did a pile of correspondence "to do's" catch your eye on both sides of the screen for your computer?

Think to yourself, "Isn't working in this clutter a dumb way to start off each day?" Make a personal commitment to do something about clearing the clutter around your working space. Take your first action step by picking up and reviewing a couple of articles on the subject and quickly review a couple of books on the topic of organizing your home and office space. You will unlikely find anything really new in the reading but it will "dust off" for you some valuable anti-clutter principles you've probably known about but that have been gathering cobwebs in the far regions of your mind.

Here are some tips for taking the journey of Clearing the Clutter in your life at home and at work.

**FOCUS ON FEELING BETTER.** One way you can nurture your emotions is to take control over your immediate environment. You can feel more secure when you gain and maintain control over the environments you live in at home and work. By reducing clutter and getting organized, you can create a more orderly world for yourself. .

**DISTINGUISH THE IMPORTANT VS. THE URGENT.** The first step toward creating order and clearing the clutter in your home and work environments is to ask yourself, "What's really important to me in terms of controlling my own space?" When we can't control what's going on around us, we can do all we can to clear the clutter to better control the most productive arrangement of the space, the things and the tools around us at home and work. Reacting to the "tyranny of the urgent" tends to contribute to a trail of clutter in our lives. A byproduct of clearing the clutter is that in discarding or giving away unnecessary things we find that the stuff in our lives isn't really so important anymore. What we really desire is more discretionary time to invest in relationships with family members and friends and time for ourselves to relax, study, and pray. Avoiding the "tyranny of the urgent" and clearing the clutter are critical steps toward buying yourself additional discretionary time!

## **GET STARTED NOW**

by setting a specific time for your "clearing the clutter" campaign. Don't wa

it until you have found an "ideal" way of organizing things. Don't try to cram in your clearing of clutter in between other tasks or you will just get more frustrated. Commit an hour a day to go after a specific area such as your desk, bedroom closet, kitchen counter, or work bench and you will be on your way to enjoying the optimum organization of your personal space.

**HONOR YOUR UNIQUE WORKING STYLE.** We are all different and things should be organized in ways that allow our natural work styles to function best. An example is a totally clear desk does not work for me. I like to have the materials for current coaching and consulting clients in vertical files or notebooks where I can see them. When I think of something beneficial to a client I can go right to their file or notebook and drop a note or article related to them in their file.

**CUSTOM ORGANIZE YOUR SPACE AND DESKTOP.** My files are kept in four main locations, desk top, a hanging day and month drop file in my desk, console hanging files next to my desk, and archives in shelves and file cabinets in a nearby storage area. My desk top files are labeled, color coded and arranged along the back edge of my desk facing a wall. They are next to my in basket. My hanging console files are quickly available to me on the left and right hand side of my desk, which form a U shape with my desk top. My computer is on the wall behind me on a console that goes wall to wall, with printers and a copier easily accessed on each end of the console. By turning my chair around from my desk I can move easily over to my computer as needed.

One of the clutter industry's gurus, Julie Morgenstern authored a book called "Organizing from the Inside Out. Her space maintenance theory is SORT, PURGE, ASSIGN, CONTAINERIZE and EQUALIZE. Here is how to apply her strategy. Begin by sorting the clutter into several piles.

1. Things to file - Insurance policies, warranties, contracts, etc.
2. Things that require action - Correspondence, bills, proposals, etc.
3. Things for other people - Thank you notes, greeting cards, articles, etc.
4. Things that are pending - Invitations, tickets, and other items needing future attention.
5. Things to purge by throwing or giving them away - Needless things should be the largest pile!

The decision to purge can be difficult or even avoided. It is a major problem for many of us because clutter is the result of postponed decisions or procrastination. Avoid purging and the "stuff" in your home and work environment will come around again and again to clutter your mind and your environment. As a life-long "keeper" and "clutter" person, I speak with authority. I urge you to grit your teeth and PURGE what you don't really need!

**SELECT PROPPER EQUIPMENT.** The key to a clutter-free lifestyle is to have a place to ASSIGN and put everything important. This calls for selecting and using the right file holders, tool holders, containers, book shelves, cabinets, computer programs and electronic equipment to support the efficiency and pleasure of your work and leisure at home and your professional responsibilities at work.

**EQUALIZE YOUR DAILY CLUTTERING**

. Take the last 15 minutes of your workday to EQUALIZE the inevitable cluttering moves you make during the day by organizing for the next day and cleaning up your desk and office clutter. Do the same thing at the end of your day at home. Make it a powerful, positive and productive habit and you will experience the joy of dialing living in relatively clutter-free environments at home and work!

If you need help in mastering and implementing any of the skills and tactics mentioned, I'm here for you! Please visit the Call-A-Coach section of my web site for more information.

### About the author:

Dr. Mac shares with business owners the practical knowledge and insights he gained as a small company CEO. He founded Sycamore Ranch, Inc. when 27 and as CEO led his partners and a staff of 100 for 16 years in developing and operating the 50 acre recreational facility. Years later, he integrated what he learned from his Doctoral program at USC with his practical business experiences and began consulting. For four decades Mac's coached business owners in mastering and applying "how to" leadership and managerial skills for: Hiring and retaining only the top ten percent producers; Optimally deploying and supervising staff to maximize their personal motivation; Developing high integrity leadership teams; Facilitating mutual performance accountability and peer coaching processes; and, Integrating his Intentional Business Integrity Process into their company operations. Mac has served leaders in manufacturing and high tech companies; accounting, banking and insurance enterprises; medical and health care organizations; service and retail oriented businesses; as well as educational, governmental and non profit organizations. Q&A ProActive Leadership 888-648-5552 or MacAdam@PALConsulting

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