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time and prioritize tasks to ensure that you meet deadlines and achieve goals.

TECHNIQUES TO INCREASE PRODUCTIVITY

Identify time wasters at work and eliminate them. Some of these may include: distractions, informational or unsolicited email, email that doesn't answer the questions asked, not knowing how to use the software tools you have, inability to find paper or electronic documents or files when needed and a lack of documented processes and procedures.

Develop strategies for accomplishing the most important action items each day in order to meet your goals and complete projects on time. Create a system that you will use and maintain daily that will help you track your action items. Your ideal solution may be a hybrid of electronic and paper-based systems.

GET ORGANIZED AT WORK

Working in an organized, productive office is a must in today's business climate. Companies have fewer resources to accomplish what needs to get done and can't afford any lost time or productivity due to lack of systems, processes and organization. However, the question I hear often is: "Where do I start?"

It doesn't matter what industry you work in, or what your title is – all offices can be broken down into four areas that require streamlined systems and processes to be created and maintained.

THE FOUR AREAS

- 1 **PAPER** May include paper management systems, paper flow and filing and retrieval systems.
- 2 **ELECTRONIC INFORMATION** Any information stored electronically, such as documents, customer information, photos, etc.
- 3 **STUFF** Anything that must live in the office that isn't paper.
- 4 **TIME MANAGEMENT** The desire and ability to manage your

Conduct and participate in productive meetings.

Meetings can waste a lot of time and produce few results; implement these techniques to ensure productive meetings: start on time, show up on time, use an agenda and distribute before the meeting, keep it short, schedule for 45 minutes instead of an hour, don't allow scope creep, acknowledge the elephant in the room, choose an effective moderator or facilitator, assign a designated timekeeper, conduct meetings while standing, listen, stop multitasking, show respect, be prepared, don't speak just to be heard, if feasible – attend by phone, follow up and end on time. Implement one or several paper management systems for your office. Depending on your needs, these may include: a Daily Action Center reference system – operational or archival.

Get in the habit of eliminating paper and information immediately if not needed or after the purpose has been served. Eliminate immediately: junk mail, meeting agendas when stored electronically, draft documents stored electronically, brochures from past conferences you didn't attend, outdated marketing material, invitations to events you won't attend. Eliminate after the purpose has been served: printed email, project notes or documentation from projects that never happened, articles or clippings you've not read in more than three years, documents distributed at meetings if saved electronically, boarding passes more than a year old, old catalogs, and operation manuals for items you don't own anymore. **20%**

IMAGE COURTESY IKEA

Better You is a guest column where people share their professional tips and personal stories to help you learn, grow, become inspired and gather the tools to build a Better You. You can be the next Better You guest. Write to editor@425magazine.com.



Laura Leist, a certified professional organizer, is an organizing and productivity consultant, founder of Eliminate Chaos and author of "Eliminate the Chaos at Work: 25 Techniques to Increase Productivity" (Wiley 2011) and "Eliminate Chaos: The 10-Step Process to Organize Your Home & Life" (Sasquatch 2006). To learn more, visit eliminatethechaosatwork.com or eliminatechaos.com.