

Help Wanted: Must be Organized

By Helen Kornblum, MA

Have you read the classified job ads lately? More and more, employers list being organized as a necessary skill for job applicants. Read the *Wall Street Journal* and other business publications and you'll find the same emphasis for midlevel managers as well as business leaders. The marketplace now values organizational skills for many reasons.

Having and using information provides a strong competitive edge in business. Unfortunately, there's now more information than most of us can successfully manage. To make matters worse, we invite a non-stop barrage of information into our work and personal lives through technology that we are dependent on in our offices and carry with us almost 24/7. Most of this information ends up in piles of paper that litter our offices, waiting to be purged, sorted, filed, or acted on.

In the corporate world, some of the burden is borne by administrative assistants, who keep the tsunami of information at bay. But the entrepreneur is more at risk of overload because the small business owner is usually operating on a tight budget that doesn't cover support staff. New business owners are often overwhelmed by the many roles they have to play and probably started out with little or no idea how to set up the workflow systems they need. Even experienced owners need organizing tune-ups when their cramped physical space and unproductive habits catch up with them.

The cost of inefficiency in America's corporate offices is high. The average U.S. executive wastes 6 weeks or more per year searching for missing information, which translates to enormous costs in additional salary and lost productivity. Surveys show that 80% of the papers that are filed are never referenced again, so even more labor, space, and supplies are wasted.

Our cluttered business landscape also reveals problems with decision making and procrastination. Productivity guru David Allen, author of *Getting Things Done*, advises that to keep work moving, you have to decide what the next step will be for every piece of paper or project. Choosing to do nothing may be fine for the moment, as long as the work is scheduled for the appropriate time or person. Proper delegation of tasks is an equally important organizing skill for leaders who want to develop their employees.

Employers want workers who understand the mission, have strong skills, *and* the ability to be productive. The best writer, sales person, massage therapist, jeweler,

or teacher can deliver more if she/he knows how to plan an efficient schedule, deal with interruptions, avoid time wasters, and meet deadlines. Think about what “must be organized” means the next time you apply for or hire for a job opening.

© *Helen Kornblum, MA, is a Professional Organizer. She owns www.NaturalOrderOrganizing.com and provides services for residential and business clients.*