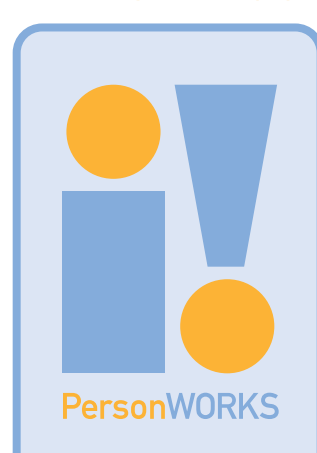


Spring is coming on March 20th!

MARCH 2004

Cleaning only lasts days, while a good organizational system can last a lifetime. This month's newsletter will help you get ready for spring organizing.



IN THIS ISSUE, WE WILL DISCUSS:

- A question from a reader who asks a **how to keep the top of her desk from being cluttered.**
- **Ten tips to keep clutter from taking over** your personal life and home
- **A case study of a garage** in dire need of organizing help
- **How to make the most out of the first day of spring** and carry the benefits on throughout the year

CELEBRATE MARCH'S ORGANIZING HOLIDAYS:

- **Organize your home office day** – second Tuesday in March
- **Procrastination week** - second week in March (no, you can't wait to celebrate it until April!)
- **Clutter awareness week** – third week in March
- **Clean out your closet week** – third week in March
- March 20th, the **first day of spring**



Happy
St. Patrick's
Day!

Dear Personworks:



As one of your readers, I would love to know how to make decisions to clear off one's desk. I'm envious of all my colleagues who manage to end the day with only their stapler and a roll of tape as centerpieces. How do you keep a clear desk and still stay effective?

*From:
Envious in Portland*

Dear E:

Clearing off one's desk is a common goal. It's a lot of work to get to a system that lets you be effective with a clean desk, but you can do it in a weekend and keep it organized for just minutes a day. Now every person is different, and as you know, I don't believe in one-size-fits-all systems. But let me give you an example of how I solved this problem for one of my past clients.

This client was a visual person. Her major problem was the paper files on her desk. Visual people always want to be able to see their papers. They get uneasy if their active work is out of sight. The most important thing to me is that my clients feel confident and sure about where their "stuff" is. So I developed the following set of criteria for this person:

- Paper must be at eye level so she could see it
- Inexpensive and practical, to fit her personal style
- The most active papers have to be easy to pick up and take with you

A key part of the solution I designed for this client was the Pendaflex Vertical File product.

<http://www.pendaflex.com/Americas/pendaflex/newpendyexpanding.html>

To get the most from the system, I divided her papers into categories. This client was a teacher, so I arranged a system like this:

- Class 101
- Class 102
- Essay to be published
- Papers to grade
- Things to read for class
- Things to research for class
- Things to return to library
- Information for exercise for classes
- Mail to open
- Evaluations for students
- Information on students

This covered most of the papers that were used on a day-to-day basis. All less frequently used papers went into reference files. These reference files could go out of sight into the filing drawer. For each major category of papers, I recommend:

Pendaflex Box-Bottom Hanging Folders, Box Of 25

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00006ICCC/personworks-20>

These are a bit more expensive because they have closed sides, but they're worth every penny. Documents and disks always fall out of the box bottom files that don't have the sides! For her smaller subcategories, like the class notes for a particular day, I recommended these:

Recycled Reinforced Top Tab Kraft File Folders

<http://www.staples.com/Catalog/Browse/Sku.asp?PageType=1&Sku=ESSRK15213>

Be sure to purchase the reinforced tabs, or you will end up buying replacements within a year. I did all her labeling and initial filing for her. If you're doing it yourself, I recommend handwriting the labels instead of typing them. The problem with typing them out is that you tend to save up your new files until you have a few of them so that you can type them all out at once. That never happens, and you end up with a desk full of file folders, holding important documents you cannot find. Unless you have an assistant, just fill the label out with decent handwriting and put it away! If you're concerned that you have too many files to categorize, or you think that the system is too difficult, or you want a method that doesn't require label-typing, give me a call! I have dozens of solutions to these kinds of problems, and I'd love to help you figure out which one is best for you.

CREATIVE WAYS TO KEEP CLUTTER FROM TAKING OVER YOUR PERSONAL LIFE AND HOME. 10 TIPS

There are lots of side effects when your house is cluttered. It's hard to have a romantic candlelit dinner when there's piles of paper all over the dinner table. You don't want to invite guests over for a St. Patrick's day party when there's a mound of shoes and coats in the middle of your hall. Try these simple tricks and reduce your clutter as Step One of your big plans!

1. Get yourself an "inbox" for mail, bills, etc. It should be about an inch deep. Make your new rule: every time the inbox gets full, you have to empty it (not just get rid of a few things so there's more room!)
2. Find containers that are pleasing to your eye for old photos and letters. They can be an attractive, organized part of your closet. Check out <http://www.exposuresonline.com> for some attractive, practical memento holders.
3. Speed up labeling with fun and funky labels for your organizing systems. You can use these for the Pendaflex labeling file in your office or the tabs I described in the previous section.
Brother PT-1750 Electronic Labeling System
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00005K4PO/personworks-20>
4. Take a scrap booking class with a Creative Memories representative. These are great ways to turn piles of pictures into beautiful memories. <http://www.creativememories.com/home.asp?GID=0>
5. Look at things in "short term storage", like the box by your desk. Throw away or donate what you don't need, and move the rest to "long term storage", like a place in the garage.
6. Keep yourself from covering the dining room table with bills by covering it with a gorgeous new table cloth you won't hate the heart to cover up.
<http://www.crateandbarrel.com/Categories/TableLinens/TableclothsNapkins/default.asp>
7. Tell your friends each week what you plan to do to reduce the clutter in your house. Peer pressure is an incredible motivator!
8. Organize your clothing closet by color. It's much faster to put things back. The colors will inspire you to keep it orderly, and you can toss what doesn't appeal to you.
9. Designate area in the house for activities, like bill paying and arts and crafts. Purchase a plastic dresser on wheels for these activities take it to your favorite space in your home and put it back in the office or den when you have completed the task
Mobile Storage Cart
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B0000DIN85/personworks-20>
10. Keep a heavy-duty paper shredder near wherever you open your mail, and throw everything into it when you're done. You'll work faster when you don't have to worry about whether something has your credit card number on it... and shredding papers is kind of fun! The paper shreds can be recycled curbside if you live in Seattle; just put them in a paper bag labeled as "paper".
Fellowes Confetti-Cut Shredder
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00004U8R8/personworks-20>

ABOUT PERSONWORKS WEBLINKS

One quick update: I often talk about products from Amazon in my newsletter. I highly recommend them for my clients, since they can quickly order what they need instead of having to make shopping lists that may never get fulfilled. As of this month, my newsletter and web log include special links that go directly to the product page within Amazon. These also allow me to keep track of which recommended products my clients buy, so I know how useful my recommendations are. I want to tell you this because Personworks also earns a small fee from each item that's purchased through one of these links. I thought it was only fair to let all of my readers know. I'll keep recommending the very best products, though, whether they're on Amazon or not!

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The Garage: Many a family's worst organizing nightmare

Many of my clients tell me: They wish the garage was organized. But this weekend the game's on and friends are coming over, next weekend is skiing, the weekend after that is housecleaning...

There are actually many reasons why people will have this on their to-do lists for years without making any progress. Some of the most common are:

- **Fear of failure:** What if you do all that work, then don't keep it up?
- **Fear of success:** It's been that way so long that deep down, the mess may be comforting.
- **Overwhelmedness:** How do you figure out where to begin? There's just so much stuff!
- **Insufficient space:** You may have more things than you have available storage.
- **Can't bear to let things go:** You just know that as soon as you get rid of something, you're going to need it again

The list goes on and on, and every problem has its own tricks to get to a solution. No matter what your challenge, just remember: If you get rid of one pile of clutter you have succeeded. Don't think of your job as "organize the garage". Think of it as "today, I'm going to get all the holiday decorations organized". You'll feel an incredible sense of relief when you accomplish that goal, and you can move on to your next one!

The most important part of garage organization is getting rid of what you don't need. Here is good example: You had a lamp in your office; the lamp either broke or didn't match the new décor. Instead of donating it, you thought to yourself,

"I loved that lamp; someday soon I am going to get it repaired."

OR

"What if I need another lamp sometime in the future and I give this one away?"

The truth is:

- a. You can get another lamp if in the future if you need one.
- b. If you haven't taken the lamp in for repairs by now, you NEVER will!

Another popular situation is:

Your kids are on their own, but they want to keep their memorabilia, and all the stuff doesn't fit in their new apartment. What to do? My answer is simple: sell anything that's replaceable (like an old desk or boom-box). Pack everything else into boxes. Each time you see the kids, bring a box with you. Encourage them to donate what's inside to Goodwill, but slowly transfer the responsibility to them. I learned this trick from my in-laws who used it on my husband! He shrank six boxes of "memories" down to one, and threw away piles of paper he'd never looked at twice

NOTE:

A garage IS for the following:

- Cars
- Seasonal items
- Tools
- Lawn care equipment

A garage is NOT for:

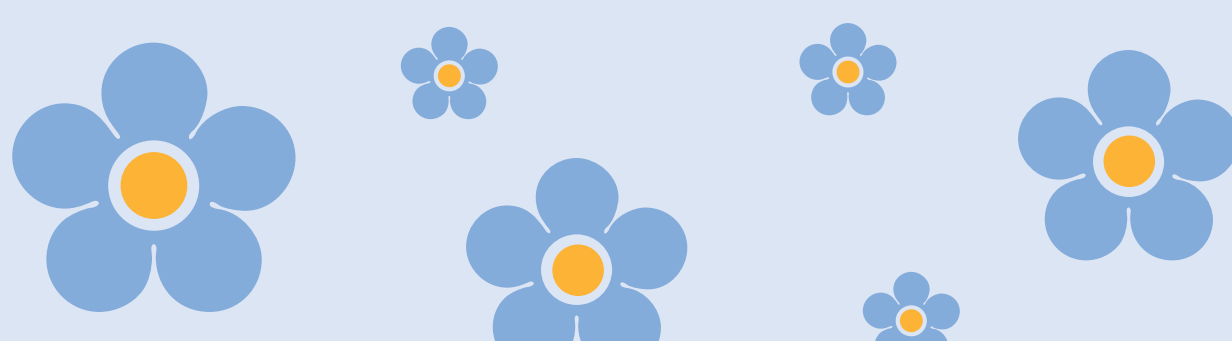
- Storage of things that you might want to use later (like the lamp)
- Memorabilia
- Old photos
- Old records

The truth is, your garage will destroy the above items; it is NOT an archival vault! Anything that is valuable to you should have a home inside your house. If you can't find or don't have room for them, get rid of something else that you CAN live without. Think of the things you would take with you if you only could take the bare minimum. I doubt your old stuffed animal collection would qualify! Maybe one childhood memory would be ok; I did watch citizen Kane!

Citizen Kane 2-Disc Special Edition

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B00003CX9E/personworks-20>

HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING



This probably won't come as a surprise to you, but spring is my favorite time of year. Everything is blooming, the air is filled with sweet fragrances, and it is a popular time for people to get in the mood for spring cleaning, or more to the point, "spring organizing". I like to think of it as, out with the old, in with the new!

Here's some ideas for the best use of your spring organizing time:

- Go through your winter wardrobe. If you didn't wear it this season, get rid of it.
- Get rid of spring shoes that are ratty and dated.
- Plan a weekend trip. Instead of packing for just this trip, make yourself a travel kit that's always ready to go at a moment's notice. Include travel-size toiletries, enough of any prescription medicine to last you a week, photocopies of your credit cards and drivers license, and two simple changes of clothes. Always keep this stored in your suitcase. When you have a last minute trip, you'll always be ready to go.
- Bring a plate of cookies to a neighbor and get to know them... and ask them if they know a neighborhood kid who mows lawns. You can save yourself a few hours and get rid of your mower!
- Sort through gloves and mittens and be sure they are still a pair and that they are worth keeping. Empty the pockets of all your winter clothes—you'd be surprised how often things disappear for a year, hiding away in your coat pocket.
- Go through your sporting goods following the usual rule: If you haven't used it in a year, get rid of it! I have a wonderful client who has 12 pairs of skis. He uses the same pair every week, so why keep the old? He says, "just in case". I say, "donate them to the high school ski team!" He is having a hard time letting go, a very normal gut reaction. Once he does, he will not once regret it. Especially after he gets his tax refund!
- Go through your linen closet and recycle old rags to Goodwill. Did you know they make them into industrial rags for cleaning? http://www.goodwill.org/index_gii.cfm/2535/ They also take soiled clothing for this purpose!
- Keep a minimum of 3 sheet sets for each bedroom so you don't have to do laundry as often. Store them in boxes that slide under the bed.
Sterilite Underbed Wheeled Storage Container
<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B0000CFH2T/personworks-20>
- Consolidate Band-Aids to one box (I know you have 2 or more!). Ditto for your shampoos—pour any half-full bottles together. If you bought a shampoo that you didn't like but can't get rid of it, toss that too.
- Donate board games that you didn't play within the last year.
- Toss mascara that is over six months old. I know a gal that developed an eye infection; according to her doctor, the likely culprit was old mascara.
- Toss out things that you bought on a whim that you have never used, like green ginger bath and body gel, (as an example).
- Throw away used razors and purchase replacements. Check your copious quantities of shaving cream all over your bathroom and toss what is empty or close to it.
- In the kitchen, go through the pantry or cupboards and toss items that look old and scary. For example:
 - dated cereal
 - a squished box of processed food,
 - baby food, if you baby is now a toddler
 - dented canned goods
 - unlabeled canned goods
 - jars of molasses or vinegar that you don't recall ever purchasing, (especially if you don't recognize the label as recent!)
 - hardened sugar
 - old flour
 - sticky bottle of honey

You get the idea. This is also a great opportunity to add Lazy Susans to your cupboard or pantry for easier access to canned goods, condiments and spices. Click here for an inexpensive example:

Non-skid turntable

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B0000CFT9P/personworks-20>

Make sure to measure your cupboards to ensure that they fit! Here is the main page for other sizes:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/external-search?tag=personworks-20&keyword=lazy+susan&mode=kitchen>

Now that you feel clutter free, you can enjoy you more efficient home!



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