



## Organizing Tips...

# Five Ways to be More Productive

When working with clients I'm often asked, "Which biggest 'quick hits' will boost my productivity?" We're so pressed for time that we don't even have 10 minutes to talk about how we can save time! (I would argue that you do have time or can *make* the time to streamline your tasks, but that is a conversation for another day.) There are many tweaks to our routines that we can make, but the items listed below are great starters and will immediately enhance your productivity.

**1. Turn off email notification bells and pop-up boxes.** Such a small thing can make a huge difference. Every time the bell goes off, you must check your email – it's human nature. By turning off these interruptions, you will stay focused and finish your tasks more quickly. When you're at a stopping point, it is a good time to check your email. You'll be amazed at how much more you will accomplish with this one tiny change. Don't believe me? Try it for three days – you'll notice a difference.

**2. Batch your action.** When we're in "phone" mode, for example, it's easier to continue to make phone calls, than it is to switch to another activity, then back

to the phone again. Batching your actions together will help you be more productive. Most likely you're already practicing this wisdom when you run errands. You probably don't run one errand today, then wait and run another errand tomorrow. You try to do all your errands at one time so you get them all done more quickly. (If you aren't batching your errands, then try it – it is definitely faster.) Batching works well for repetitive tasks such as making phone calls, filing, sending emails, running reports, entering time sheets, creating expense reports, running errands, et cetera. Don't wait too long to process your batches, however, or you might forget the details of the job!

**3. Organize your files.** Many of us are organized in the office, but at home we often forget the same rules apply. Having a working filing system at home for papers (and email) is just as important as at the office. At home it's easy to use a small two-drawer vertical file cabinet and manila folders. Create categories and subcategories just like at the office. If you don't like the "industrial" look of office filing cabinets, that's okay. There are plenty of aesthetically pleasing options that would look good in your home.

**4. Prioritize your tasks.** Write a to-do list and *number the items in the order you will accomplish them*, "1", "2" "3", etc... If you are really resistant to this idea, then that means you should probably try it. Some things are more important than others and numbering your tasks helps you weigh one task against the other. It forces you to really think about what needs to happen and when. Ask yourself, "What is due today? What is due tomorrow? What happens if I don't accomplish this task?" Numbering also helps you stay focused, act more quickly, and complete the most important things. This way, at the end of the day, you leave work feeling that you really did get something done.

**5. Write your goals and compare to your tasks.** It's hard to know where you're going if you don't have a destination in mind! Your goals are your destination; and it's much easier to stay focused and on track when your daily tasks lead you to your goals. To make sure you are moving in the right direction write your goals down, and then review your tasks weekly against your goals. Ask yourself, "Does this task get me one step closer to my goal?" If the task does, then you're

in great shape - keep plugging away! If the task doesn't, then think about why you're doing it. Is it really important? If it is, then you need to add another goal to your list. Most likely, however, it's a task that you've felt you *had* to do, but one that doesn't really make sense any longer.

By implementing any, or all five of these productivity strategies, you'll get the right stuff done faster and will have more time for the activities and people you enjoy. **Z**



Lorena Prime

*Lorena Prime, Owner of Clearly Organized, speaks at companies and organizations on Time Management and other productivity issues. She uses a 5-stage process to help people shorten routine office work and save 1-2 hours every day. What could you do with an extra 1-2 hours per day? For more information, visit [www.ClearlyOrganizedLife.com](http://www.ClearlyOrganizedLife.com) or call 617-633-2199.*