



Disclaimer

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Introduction:

The saying, "*There's always room for improvement*" is especially true in optimizing your small business to reach its best potential possible. Looking for ways to build a better business means taking a close up look at where your business might be lagging and determining what can be done to make it better.

Areas that may need improvement might be in budgeting / finances, organization, time management, production efficiency, etc. If you can make at least one area of improvement in your business each year, the results can have a huge affect on the future of your business. Whatever it may be that needs improvement, this report is meant to offer some helpful ideas and boost your enthusiasm to build a better business.

Wishing you success!

Business Management Tips:

1. Plan Goals: Yearly, monthly, weekly

We all need to set goals if we want to accomplish anything. When setting goals, be sure you set more general overall (yearly) goals as well as smaller ones. Break down your more general goals into specific monthly and weekly goals.

For example: Let's say your yearly goal is become more organized in your business. A monthly goal might be to organize all the blogs you have by deciding on a year's worth of topics to write about for each one. A weekly goal could be to write a month's worth of blog posts for one specific blog.

2. Create a master "to do" list for your daily goals; keep your daily goal calendar in front of you at your desk.

You will find that you are much more productive if you have a "to do" list for your business. The list can be created in the morning of each day or the night before. Be sure to keep your list in front of you as you work so that you keep mindful of what you want to get done. It also helps when you finish one task to have the next one right there in front of you. That way, no time is lost in trying to decide what to do.

3. Prioritize your tasks so that the most important ones get done.

In any given day, there are things that *need* to get done and things you would *like* to get done. Distinguish between them so that you are sure to accomplish the most important things first. You may have a writing deadline which you need to finish. Then, you may want to send an email out to your list, but it may not be pressing. It can wait if it has to. Prioritize your tasks.

Here are some ways to organize your to-do list:

- ⤴ Write down the important tasks at the top, then move down to the lesser ones
- ⤴ Give each task a number - 1 is for the most important task, 2 is the next needed, etc.

4. Plan Projects: Create checklists, break down projects into smaller chunks, set deadlines for each task.

Creating checklists for each project is a huge help in keeping track of what you need to do and what has already been done. As you complete each item on your checklist, check it off so that you can easily see that it has been done. This also serves as a way to stay encouraged and motivated - being able to see how much you have already accomplished.

Break down each main project into several smaller steps or tasks. Assign a deadline to finish each task. That way, you have definite goals and timetables to reach them.

Here's an example:

Main Project: Organize Your Desk

Smaller task: Go through all the papers on your desk.

Separate them into piles of:

- ⤴ ?Throw aways
- ⤴ Keep to work on at a later time
- ⤴ Things that need to be done now
- ⤴ Any other categories you feel are necessary

This task will be done by xxx (a specific date)?

Smaller task: Set up a filing system. File papers from your desk in the appropriate categories. You can use a standing filing cabinet or a hanging one in a drawer.

This task will be done by xxx (a specific date)

At the end of each month, go through your files and clean them out to keep everything up-to-date. Be sure to shred any sensitive information.

Resource: *The note-to-self organizer, Chandlerproject.org*

5. Create a "System" (especially if you work with clients)

Set up a clear system for moving work through. For example: when you get a new order for some work, create a file for it. Put any notes in it about the project - tasks to be completed and date for completion. Jot down any special instructions from the client you may be working for.

Keep the folder with your pile or list of projects that are to be worked on. When it is finished, move it to your file drawer of "completed projects." Keep it there for a good amount of time in case any questions come up on it or in the event you get repeat business. It helps to have notes on previous projects you did for that person.

6. Projects that seem to always get left on the back burner - make a decision how important they really are...if it's definitely important either outsource it, or add 30 minutes at the end of each work day to complete one at a time.

Do you have some projects that have been on your to do list for quite some time? You know, those projects that get carried over from week to week but never seem to make it to the "done" category?

Take some time and evaluate if those tasks are important to the success of your business. If they are not, forget about them and move on to what is. If you feel they would help to grow your business, then outsource them if you don't have the time to do them yourself. Get them done one way or another. If outsourcing isn't an option right now, schedule in thirty minutes at the end of your day to work on them. You will soon see that you have accomplished them.

It is important, as you strive to manage your business, that you keep focused on activities that will add to your business success. It can promote discouragement if you have tasks hanging over your head, so either get help or press the "delete key."

7. Track marketing results consistently to improve results and eliminate marketing tactics that are time & money wasters.

Marketing needs to be effective or there is no point in doing it. That is why it is essential that you track your results. Marketing takes time and money. It doesn't make sense to keep doing something if you aren't seeing good results from it.

Example: Let's say you pay for an ad to run in a local newspaper. That costs money, right? You decide you will run it for a month and then evaluate how it did. At the end of the month, you see that you only brought in two new sales, which resulted in much less money than it cost to run the ad. It's time to move on to something else.

Or...you spend time writing an article for a magazine which yields basically no new business. It took you a good part of a day to write the article, proof it and get it to the point where you were happy with it. If it did not bring in any new subscribers or customers, then it's time to move on to another publication or marketing strategy.

Sometimes you can fool yourself by thinking you are doing all you can to market your business. However, if you are not tracking the results of your marketing efforts, you can be wasting good time and money.

8. Take time to incorporate motivational incentives for your business

Do you work on your business day after day but never take time to reward yourself? Or maybe you don't have any contact with others who could support and encourage you, such as in a mastermind group or active forum.

If that is you, it's time to build some motivational incentives into your business. Take a small portion of your week's income and treat yourself to something special. Or take action now to get into a mastermind group or to get an accountability partner. Having someone else hold you accountable can do wonders for your motivation and productivity levels.?

9. Subscribe to the top 3 resources to keep you up-to-date and knowledgeable in your field. (So that you're not wasting hours filtering through a lot of articles and content yourself.)

Consider choosing the top three resources in your field and subscribing to their newsletters and updates. It can get very confusing and overwhelming when you try to follow too many people. They may have differing opinions and you will end up not knowing what to do.

Choose three that you have become acquainted with and respect. Subscribe to their information, watch what they do and follow their advice.

10. Seek help when you don't achieve results. Sometimes constructional criticism is

needed, sometimes a fresh look from someone is needed to see what we can't see, sometimes coaching is needed, etc.

If you have been working at your business for some time without seeing good results, it's time to enlist the help of others. You may need to hire a coach or mentor, or join a mastermind group. Sometimes, it takes someone else (who is not so involved in the day to day aspects) to take a look at your business and see what can be changed, improved, etc.

Don't go on with trying to do it all yourself. Get the help of others who have gone before you and become successful. It will quicken your rise to success and encourage you along the way.

11. Use good communication -- poor communication with staff, employees, assistants, etc. can really hinder progress or even result in tasks needing to be done over again.

Good communication is vital to the health of your business, whether it is communication with your customers or employees.

?With customers, good communication is essential to creating a good relationship with them. Have you ever had your phone call or email simply ignored? It does not create good feelings about the company, does it? How likely are you to do business with them again? Not very.

If you have employees, being clear in your communication is so important to getting things done the way you wanted. If employees don't understand your intentions, they are likely to do something different than what you had expected, slowing down productivity.

Take a step back and assess your communication skills. If you find they are less than needed, take time to work on them.

12. Create a Budget

Budgets! The word may send shivers down your spine, but nonetheless, they are an essential part of a business.

A budget is needed to keep track of your spending. If you spend more than you make, your business will be in serious trouble. Don't let that happen when you can simply take care of the problem by setting up a budget.

Determine how much your average monthly earnings are and how much of those earnings you can spend. You may have fixed expenses such as web hosting, an email manager, etc. So, figure those in and decide how much you have left over to spend on coaching or training products.

Sticking with a budget can be a challenge to us all, however, bottom line is that you will make more profit by doing so.

***Resources to checkout:** Mint.com and MySpendingPlan.com

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Business Productivity Tips:

1. Create a procedures checklist for each type of project and business task: Record each activity and length of time it takes to accomplish each task while doing projects. This will help with future projects and make it easy to outsource when necessary.

By creating procedures for activities that you do multiple times, you can save yourself much time and frustration. How many times have you worked your way through a task, accomplished it, and then found the next time you had to do it you had to start back at the beginning of trying to figure it all out? It happens to all of us, so it's time to put a stop to it!

Type up procedures and checklists for each project and task that you do. Keep them in a folder on your computer or print them out and put them in a notebook. Either way, have them handy so that when you go to do the task again, you can simply work through the steps and get it done quickly and efficiently.

2. Examine your daily schedule on a frequent basis to determine how you can improve productive results; which tasks are time wasters and should be eliminated, which tasks might be better off outsourced.?

Take some time to look over your daily schedule and evaluate whether the activities on it are ?bringing success or wasting your time.

Are you spending hours on facebook? Are you doing tasks that you have always done just because you have always done them? Determine whether the activities you are spending time on are bringing in new business or developing a better relationship with your market. If so, great; if not, discontinue them (or at least adjust some things) and spend your time on things that really count.

Also, determine if there are tasks that could help your business but you just don't have time to get to them. In that case, consider outsourcing them.?

3. Consider outsourcing more. It's easier to keep up with multiple projects if you have

help

Speaking of outsourcing, it can be a common misconception that you shouldn't spend money on outsourcing until your business reaches a certain level. However, think about the length of time that you have had certain tasks on your to-do list, only to get carried over week after week because you didn't get to them.

Now's the time to get them done. If you cannot find the time yourself, hire some extra help for a particular project or for a set number of hours each month. Think about the sales you could be missing out on because you just can't seem to get that report written or because you don't have the time to market your product once it's finished.

Outsourcing can do more than just help you keep your head above water. It can help you be more productive, which in the end, leads to more sales.

Resources: *Elance.com, Freelancer.com, Odesk.com*

4. For outsourcing: Define responsibilities for each person in charge of certain tasks so that everything gets done and completed on time.

When outsourcing, be sure to be very clear in the responsibilities you expect each person to take. This is especially important if you have more than one project outsourced at a time.

Write down each task you expect completed, who will be doing the work, and the date it needs to be done by. This avoids confusion and the possibility that a task gets overlooked.

Creating complete lists and records will be a huge asset to your business running smoothly and getting things done on time.

5. Plan to automate as many tasks as possible for your business by investing in dependable software.

Automation is a great thing! It can save you so much time when you have systems set up and in place. List building, email marketing, blogging, and many more tasks can be automated which makes life a lot easier and frees up your time to work on things like creating new products and marketing your business.

Take advantage of resources like Aweber, which will automatically send out emails on scheduled basis as well as other reliable platforms and software that will make your business run a lot smoother. You'll wonder why you didn't do it sooner:-)

One way to determine where you might automate more is to record step-by-step the necessary tasks to complete projects. Examine carefully what steps could be shortened or automated with the help of software. Perhaps some steps can be eliminated to save time or done in a different sequence to make the work flow process easier and faster. You'll also be able to easily identify some tasks that might be outsourced. You can hand over your recorded process to a virtual assistant to perform the exact tasks you have outlined.

There is a variety of software available online for helping to create automated shortcuts for your computer. One way to automate some tedious steps while working on your Word documents is to create "macros". A macro is a created shortcut for a task that you perform repeatedly. You can read this article here, "Using Macros to Speed Up Your Work" (<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/support/using-macros-to-speed-up-your-work-HA001019230.aspx>).

A couple of resources to check out:

"Macro Scheduler" (<http://www.mjtnet.com/index.htm>) which has been used by some major companies and also offers a free trial.

For those who use Open Office, you can find a very helpful step-by-step tutorial on how to record your own macro here: (*It's surprisingly easy, and can really save a lot of time*) <http://www.tutorialsforopenoffice.org/tutorial/Macros.html>

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6. Create an online storage system for project files and necessary documents so that they can be obtained from anywhere, in case your computer crashes, or you have an emergency leave from home or office.

Setting up an online storage system not only allows you to back up your files and documents, but you'll also be able to access your files from any location. If your computer is down, you can work on a co-worker's computer, borrow your friend's computer, or even access your files from the library.

With so many online storage resources these day, you can easily find many free services as well as paid ones that can perform automatic backups for your files.

Resource for remote control over your PC: <https://secure.logmein.com/products/free>

7. Avoid "perfectionism" when it's getting in the way of getting to the next step of your project.

Perfectionism can really kill a business. Now, please understand that it is essential to hold to high standards when running a business and offer quality products and services. Your business reputation depends on it.

However, perfectionism is another thing altogether. It will slow down your progress and probably drive you crazy in the process. There is such a thing as "good enough" when it comes to getting your product finished and out there. Or when it comes to launching a new website. Do a great job and then get it out there for the world to see.

Don't let perfectionism get the best of you. Do your best and then move on. And your best doesn't have to be "perfect!"

8. Avoid "procrastination" - motivate yourself, reward yourself for achievements, break tasks down into smaller chunks so that they don't overwhelm you.

Do you struggle with procrastination? You will need to find ways to overcome it if you want to see your business grow and succeed.

Try motivating yourself with small rewards as you accomplish tasks on your to do list. Even a cup of your favorite tea or a short walk out in the sun can do the trick.

If some of your goals are "too big" which can lead you to just put them off, break them down into smaller tasks so that you can get them done. Smaller activities seem much more doable and can help accomplish bigger tasks in the long run.

Identify procrastination when you see it taking place and do something about it.

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?9. Avoid addictive time wasters - checking email, social networks.

Are you an email junkie or a social networking addict? These kinds of addictions can put a real strain on your business moving forward.

Do you find yourself checking your email every 15 minutes? Or, when you think about it, do you realize that you spend hours "networking" on facebook or twitter? Now, when actual networking is taking place, that's a good thing. But you don't need to spend two hours a day talking on facebook with people. That can be done in a just a few minutes a day.

Some people find it helpful to use a timer and set it to 10-15 minutes when they log into Facebook or Twitter. When the timer buzzes, finish what you're saying and move on to other activities.

Don't let these kinds of "addicting" behaviors hold you back from moving your business on to

the next level. Take control of your time and how you spend it.

10. Set boundaries - refuse to accept recurring interferences. Do what you can to help solve or eliminate them.

?It may be necessary to set boundaries when it comes to working at home. With all the benefits that working at home brings, it also brings some challenges.

You may need to set specific hours for work time, and then put off phone calls and other interruptions until those hours are done.

You may need to set boundaries with family members, so that they realize, when you are working, you cannot be interrupted. They may not understand at first, but if you are serious about it, they will hopefully come to respect your time.

Don't let others take advantage of you just because you're home. Let them know that you are working just as you would be in an outside job.

11. Take necessary breaks. When you're frustrated or overtired you're going to lack productivity anyway. Taking a break can help you get refreshed and work faster.

Taking breaks can actually add to your productivity. If you are getting frustrated or simply tired, continuing on can be counterproductive. It helps to get away from your computer for a period of time.

Take a walk (especially if the sun is shining!), make a smoothie energy booster, play with your dog, or do something non-work related for a while. When you come back to your work, you will be refreshed and energized.

12. Focus on only one or two projects at time until they're completed. Then, move to the next project.

Whether you are good at multi-tasking or not, try to only focus on one or two projects until you have finished them. It tends to get too confusing and overwhelming if you are trying to keep track of too many things at once. The result? Things get left out, documents are not proofread as well as they should be, and you just cannot do your overall best.

Take a couple of projects and see them through to completion. Then move on to the next.

13. Work on things that matter.

This may seem obvious, but it's worth mentioning. When working, spend your time on things

that are effective. You can think you have worked all day long, but if you have not found that your activities have been effective in the past to your business success, you can be fooling yourself.

Don't do things because you always have. If something isn't producing results, forget it and go on to something else.

Be sure you are spending your time on things that matter - things that are actually adding to your business success.

14. When you're stuck or lack knowledge to proceed forward, don't waste more time - get help from a knowledgeable source.

Have you ever been stuck on a project? More than likely you answered a resounding "YES!" When that happens, what do you do? Don't waste time going around and around, only to end up where you started - stuck.

Enlist the help of someone who can help you move forward. This might be a coach, a mastermind group, a spouse or a friend. Just be sure to get advice from someone who actually knows how to help and not from someone who is merely "guessing."

15. Upgrade your skills. Sometimes taking time to learn a new software or new techniques can help you progress faster.

You might feel that taking time out to learn something new is wasting time. After all, you're not making money; in fact, you may be *spending* money to get some help or training.

Don't look at learning as a waste of time or money. Once you have developed new skills or learned some additional knowledge, you can put it to work for you earning even more money than you previously did. Keep learning. Build time and a budget for it into your overall business plan.

16. Schedule business tasks according to your "time clock."

When scheduling tasks to get done for your business, plan them around your own "time clock," meaning "work when you work the best."

If you are at your most creative in the morning, do your writing and other more creative tasks in the morning. If you find you work best after your first cup of coffee, save the tasks that take more of your mental energy until then.

Work with your best “time clock” - not against it.

17. Passwords - put all in an excel doc

Does this scenario sound familiar? You arrive at a website where you need to sign in. You try the login information but aren't sure of your password. It doesn't take. You try another password. Still no luck. You go searching to see if you wrote the password down but can't find it. You click on the "forgot password?" link to have it sent to you. Now you are given a password you couldn't remember in a million years, and need to change it to something you can remember (if you can figure out how.)

Think of all the time you just spent on one password. A better way is to start an excel spreadsheet and have all your passwords listed there. List the websites in alphabetical order so you can easily find them. Then when you need a password, you open up the excel document and retrieve the password. Simple!

For software sources take a look at: Roboform.com, Mitto.com, Keepass.info, Passwordsafe.sourceforge.net,

18. Set specific work hours and stick to them as best you can. Let the answering machine pick up the phone calls (unless they are part of your business.)

One of the main keys to success in any business is having a good work schedule. You can have a lot of great ideas and wonderful goals, but without a time and place to proceed with your projects, they will not get done in an efficient manner.

Projects thrown together at the last minute due to lack of planning or performing tasks in a timely manner always result in a lesser quality.

Planning specific hours to work will assure that you are advancing forward on your projects. Trying to avoid interferences can also help assure that your projects get done in a timely manner. Aim to complete your major projects a day or two early to give yourself sufficient time to focus on the quality in case some tasks need to be redone or unforeseen delays arise.

19. Keep a calendar at your work space and write down all appointments, webinars, etc.

It's wise to write down everything. Leaving appointments or tasks to be kept by memory only can result in unintentional neglect that harms your reputation. No matter how well your memory may seem to serve, there are times when it may likely fail, such as when you are ill or under extra stress.

Keep a calendar nearby on your desk each work day. Jot down all your daily to-do tasks and appointments. You can certainly record your appointments and errands on your phone, but

keeping your daily to-do tasks in plain site near your work area will further encourage you to work and complete them on time.

TimeandDate.com offers some handy tools online. Here's a few that might interest you:

Create your own customized calendar to print out...

<http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/custommenu.html>

Event time announcer converts the time of your event to local times all over the world...

<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/fixedform.html>

If you're planning to call someone in a different time zone or arrange a webinar that is suitable for everyone...

<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/meeting.html>

Use this stopwatch to keep track of your actual working time. It records all starts and stops which might be useful for determining time wasters or managing the time you're spending on social networks, etc...

<http://www.timeanddate.com/stopwatch/>

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20. Set up your office so that everything is in arm's reach if possible. Have your computer, printer, fax machine, telephone, file folders, etc. all in one convenient space.

Have you ever felt like you worked yourself to death, but didn't seem to accomplish much? The most common time wasters are not always so obvious. A few minutes getting up to retrieve an item left in another room or a few more minutes spent searching for a misplaced item in your desk drawer can quickly add up and cause a big delay in progress. What's worse, each interference disrupts your focus and requires additional time to get back into focus.

For every minute you save by creating a convenient workspace, you're actually going to double that time in productivity. For this reason, keep all your work equipment nearby and make sure to have everything you need for a specific task before starting. Also, be sure to schedule a weekly maintenance to keep your desk area organized.

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21. Get to bed the same time each night.

Going to bed at a consistent time each night will help your body's system will stay in sync, allowing you to be more rested the next day.

22. Schedule Some Time for Fun

This may seem *counterproductive* instead of *productive* but it actually helps if you take a break now and then. Go for a walk or play a game of tennis. Do a little shopping.

Something that takes your mind away for a little while can help you focus better when you get back to work. You will be refreshed and ready to go again. Just don't stay away too long!

Business Organization Tips:

1. Plan weekly backups for your website?

Most business owners will not argue that doing backups is extremely important, but many fail in having a consistent schedule to do those backups. Doing your backups on a weekly schedule is wise because it can help you have the most up-to-date files ready in case they're needed. Make sure to create well-named category and subcategory files so that you can easily access any document quickly without wasting a lot of time searching for it.

A few popular online storage and backup resources:

Adrive.com

Badongo.com

Box.com

Docs.Google.com

DropBox.com

FlipDrive.com

JustCloud.com

LiveDrive.com

Mozy.com

OpenDrive.com

SafeCopyBackup.com

Skydrive.live.com

?SpiderOak.com

SugarSync.com

Syncplicity.com

2. Eliminate clutter

There's nothing like a work area filled with clutter to also clutter up your mind. Having things all over the place makes it take so long to find anything, which only creates frustration and discouragement.

Do you have a stack of papers that need going through? Schedule time to go through them and throw away any that are no longer relevant. If you do need to hang on to some, file them

in appropriate folders. If there are any that require taking action, schedule time each day (even 15 minutes will help) until the pile of papers is gone. Having a clear, tidy desk will give you a fresh outlook and an uncluttered mind.

3. Eliminate old files that are no longer needed on a weekly or monthly basis.

At the end of a week or a month, make it a practice to go through all your files. Which ones have been taken care of and can be gotten rid of? Keep the ones that are still in need of work to be done but file them in a place where you will be able to find them easily. Complete the work needed and move the file to a "completed" area.

4. Eliminate distractions

This is a big one. What are the continual distractions you find that take you away from your business? The phone ringing? The ding of a new email message? Whatever it is, eliminate it as much as possible. Turn down the sound on your computer and let the answering machine pick up the phone. It's hard to keep the flow going when you are writing a new blog post or article and you have to answer the phone three times during it.

5. Add some white noise

Sometimes distractions can't always be eliminated. For instance, your neighbor decides to mow the lawn right when you're trying to work on an important document. Adding white noise can help. You might find purchasing a CD with rain or water flowing can help calm your nerves and shut out some noise distractions.

6. Have a place for everything and everything in its place. Are you constantly looking for stuff? This is a time waster and an indication that you need to organize your office area better.

If you find that you are continually spending time looking for things -whether it's a password or a client's file - it's time to get organized.

There are very few things that you actually need on your desk. Your computer, a pen, a small notebook to keep track of things that come up during the day, etc. However, if you take a look at many business owners' desks, you will see a lot more there. This only creates confusion and makes it harder to find anything.

Have a place for everything. A good filing system is a start. Get a portable file system and start organizing all your papers and files. Keep your shopping list out in the kitchen or hung up on the refrigerator - it doesn't belong on your work desk!

7. Keep records and make sure that they're attended to on a weekly basis.

The first rule of thumb is to set a specific routine for keeping records up to date. Neglecting records will allow details to become forgotten or data to become lost and piled up to an

overwhelming job. To avoid this, decide what needs to be done to keep up efficiently and what day of the week will work best so that the job is done quickly without becoming a burden.

Keeping records can be done manually by placing hard copies in files or on your computer. If your business is growing quickly, you can send data to a trusted virtual assistant to help you maintain your records.

One way or the other, if you're keeping data stored by computer only, then be sure to keep sufficient backup files on a consistent basis.

Helpful resources to check out: Zoho.com/books, Outright.com, Quickbooksonline.com

Find some free bookkeeping and accounting tutorials here: dwmbeancounter.com

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8. Scan documents to eliminate more clutter.

For businesses that may require a lot of paperwork and documents to be stored, you might consider a resource such as OfficeDrop.com and ShoeBoxed.com.

If you're not comfortable with having your information stored in this way, you can certainly scan your own files and store them digitally on CDs, an external hard drive, a portable flash drive, or utilize a secure online storage system.

9. Create specific file folders to organize your files.

When creating a filing system, create specific folders. The more specific you can be, the better. It will really help when you are trying to locate a certain document. Some files you may want to consider having are:

- ⤴ Projects - list by specific project. Within that file, you may also want to have a "completed" and "to do" file
- ⤴ Business information like licenses, insurance, etc.
- ⤴ Advertising
- ⤴ Expenses
- ⤴ Computer information -warranties, receipts, etc.
- ⤴ and so on

Make your files specific to your business so that when you need something, it will be right at your fingertips.?

10. Create specific file folders to organize your email: "Reply later", "Read later", "Important Info" (for memberships, passwords, etc.), "Affiliate Programs" "Upcoming Events" "Upcoming Launches" etc.....

Email - do you feel like you can't keep up at times? Email can be a blessing as it makes it so easy to stay connected with others all over the world. But it can also create challenges and distractions. If you find that you are inundated with emails, you need to sort them out and get them organized.

Create folders for your emails such as:

- ▲ Respond now
- ▲ Reply later
- ▲ Important Information to Save
- ▲ Membership logins
- ▲ Passwords
- ▲ Affiliate links and information
- ▲ Upcoming launches
- ▲ Upcoming events

Putting your emails in their designated folder will make it so much easier when it's time to find one or catch up on correspondence. Spending a little extra time to get organized will be a huge help in the long run.

11. Use color coding for file folders, sticky notes, tasks, etc.

Color coding your file folders can help you to quickly locate the papers you need. Get some colored tabs for your folders and use them to separate them into categories. For example: Use blue for the expense folder, yellow for client folders, and so on.

In time you will get to know which color goes with each category and it will make the process of finding what you need much quicker and simpler.

12. Do an inventory of all the domains you own. Cancel the ones that you don't use. Focus on the ones you do use.

Do you own multiple domains? The second question is, how many of those domains are you actively using? Many of us pay for many domains but aren't really using them or keeping them updated. The result? Wasted money, which is not being a good business manager.

The second hazard of owning too many domains is the feeling of "clutter" and a sense that you are never really keeping up with your work. That produces confusion and discouragement. It brings up the question, "what should you be working on?" and the feeling that you always have something else out there that needs to be attended to, but you cannot seem to find the time to do anything about it.

Being too scattered is just not using good business sense. Do an inventory of all the domain names that you own. Determine which ones you are using and which ones you want to keep. Get rid of the others. A clean, organized business is one that is easier to stay on top of and see success in.

13. Clean off your desk - put important papers in a file folder or file drawer and keep a good file system.

It's a new year and it's time for a fresh start! Just as many people clean out drawers and closets at the start of a new year, it's the perfect time to clean off your desk and work area.

Put all the important papers in an appropriate file - only keep out the ones you are currently working on. Which is more motivating - a work area that is neat and organized or one that has papers scattered all over it? The second will prove to clutter your mind as well as your desk.

Clean everything out and then...

14. Keep your work space uncluttered. Clean it off at the end of the day - throw away papers that you don't need. File ones you do.

Keep your area and desk cleaned off. You are probably familiar with this scenario. You clean your house and put everything away where it belongs. You feel great about it and are motivated to keep it clean and organized.

Then, a week or two later, you look around and realize the condition of your house is back to being cluttered and messy. How does it make you feel? Aside from maybe wanting to scream (smile!), it creates feelings of discouragement and failure. How motivated do you feel about cleaning it all up again? Not very.

Keeping your desk and work area clean and organized will give you continual help with your motivation. It will also save you a lot of time trying to locate things you need.

At the end of each day, take a couple of minutes to go through what you have on your desk. Either file papers away or throw them out if they are no longer needed. Keep it clean!

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15. Check at the beginning of each month to make sure you have the needed supplies. If not, get them so you won't be delayed when working.

Take a little time at the beginning of each month to do a quick check to see if you have the necessary supplies. For example, computer paper, pens/pencils, notepads, file folders, etc.

When you're out shopping, pick up anything that you seem to be running low on. This will save time when you're working and find that you need something. You don't want to have to run out in the middle of your work day because you have run out of printer paper and you need to print something out NOW.

A little planning goes a long way in staying organized.

16. Have a trash basket nearby

This may sound like an obvious one, but if you don't, you will find crumpled up papers all over your desk. Then it will create confusion when it comes time to cleaning things off. You will find yourself opening up the crumpled papers to ensure it's not something important. Take care of things when they happen as much as possible. If you're ready to throw something out, get rid of it and out of sight.?

17. Have a separate work area.

Ideally, it's nice to have a separate room where you can go, close the door and work. But that is not always possible. It is highly advised, however, to have a separate work space. Don't try to use the kitchen table to work and then have papers scattered all over when it's time to make dinner. That is a sure way to lose things and get very frustrated at the same time.

Even if it's only a table or desk in the corner of a room, that's OK. You can keep your work files and papers all in that area, and that will avoid mixing up a client's file with your tax file or some other personal folder.

If you don't have a separate work area yet, take a look around your house. Where could you set up shop without there being too many distractions? It may take some rearranging of furniture, but it will help you keep your business organized, and therefore, will lead to higher productivity.

Conclusion:

Keeping your home business organized will help you become more productive. It will also reduce frustration so that you don't spend hours for looking for things. When everything has a place, it becomes so much faster and easier to accomplish your goals.

Staying organized will also be a benefit when it comes time to file your taxes. You will have all your records in one place so they are easily accessible to give to your tax person or in case of an audit.

Taking time now to organize and then taking a few minutes each week to keep things cleaned out and in their place will prove to be a great benefit to your personal well-being along with your business success.

Resources Reference:

?Accounting & Bookkeeping:

Zoho.com/books, Outright.com, Quickbooksonline.com

Some free bookkeeping and accounting tutorials here: dwmbeancounter.com

Budgeting:

Mint.com

MySpendingPlan.com

Online Backup and Storage:

Adrive.com

Badongo.com

Box.com

Docs.Google.com

DropBox.com

FlipDrive.com

JustCloud.com

LiveDrive.com

Mozy.com

OpenDrive.com

SafeCopyBackup.com

Skydrive.live.com

?SpiderOak.com

SugarSync.com

Syncplicity.com

Organizer Software:

Chandlerproject.org

Other options for backup:

CDs

External hard drive

Portable flash drive

Secure online storage system.

Outsourcing:

Elance.com

Freelancer.com

Odesk.com

Paper Control:

?OfficeDrop.com – Scan files for digital storage

ShoeBoxed.com – Scan files for digital storage

Password management software:

Roboform.com

Mitto.com

Keepass.info

Passwordsafe.sourceforge.net

Remote access to computer:

<https://secure.logmein.com/products/free/>

Share / Send Files:

DropSend.com

SendYourFiles.com

Tax filing:

TaxHead.com

EZTaxReturn.com

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TimeandDate.com:

Create your own customized calendar to print out...

<http://www.timeanddate.com/calendar/custommenu.html>

Event time announcer converts the time of your event to local times all over the world...

<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/fixedform.html>

If you're planning to call someone in a different time zone or arrange a webinar that is suitable for everyone...

<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/meeting.html>

Use this stopwatch to keep track of your actual working time. It records all starts and stops which might be useful for determining time wasters or managing the time you're spending on social networks, etc...

<http://www.timeanddate.com/stopwatch/>

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