

Reduce Clutter to Make Space for New Ideas

How to grow a bigger brain in 10 easy steps, Part 5

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My errands this past weekend included a trip to Staples to buy binders and dividers. Although I believe in maintaining a greener office, and am a tidy file keeper and organizer using electronic tools, sometimes “old school” paper based systems are the most efficient timesavers. (Speaking of electronic organization, check out [Xobni](#) - inbox spelled backwards.)

What does my passion for office supply stores have to do with marketing innovation? Two simple outcomes can result from taking time for spring cleaning in your business:

1. Decluttering will create space in your mind and your workspace for new ideas; and
2. Sifting through “old stuff” often helps you reflect on what your business has done well in the past. Some of these ideas and learning may have application to the future

Although I am certainly no organizing expert, I believe that once you’re through with tax season, you should shift your focus to getting rid of unnecessary processes, possessions, and expenses. Office moves are also a great opportunity to embark on a “purge.” We did it last summer and were amazed at how much useless stuff we had amassed. Making the activity a companywide effort can build a strong work team too (especially if post-cleaning snacks and beverages are involved).

Your decluttering might include:

- Scrubbing your database - one of your most valuable marketing assets. Scan in business cards you have collected and make sure client/prospect information is current. Reaching out to current and past clients will also help you stay top-of-mind and can lead to new business.
- Eliminating unnecessary expenses, freeing up dollars to invest in marketing and development
- Creating filing systems and investigating ways to share common and frequently-used resources
- Deleting or archiving old emails
- Cleaning off your desktop and tossing any office clutter
- Making a list of those pesky “I’ll get to it someday” projects and hiring a bright student to help. (Many high school seniors will soon be available for precollege projects.)
- Consider those people and processes that suck time and resources and look for ways to deal with them.

You do not have to do all of these things. But pick one or two and commit to your “spring cleaning.” Any little step to decluttering your business life may give you a fresh new outlook on your business. Have any organizing or cleanup stories from your business? Feel free to comment!

Resources:

All kinds of tips for life and office organizing: <http://lifeorganizers.com/office.com>

Organizing your emails: <http://www.microsoft.com/atwork/productivity/email.aspx>

If you literally want to green-clean your office: <http://www.greenhouseecocleaning.com/>

Can’t bear to throw out the paper business cards you collect? Here’s a cool way to store them:

<http://www.thinkgeek.com/homeoffice/supplies/9d84/>

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