

How To Become Better Organized And More Productive

by Robert N. Taylor

The keys to becoming a better organized and more productive person are commitment, time, space and tools.

The simple fact of the matter is that you are not going to achieve much if you do not commit yourself to change. In this regard a commitment is a promise you make to yourself. Following the commitment, you must face the reality that change takes time. Habits are difficult things to break, but breaking old habits and replacing them with new ones is what you must do. Just remember that this process takes time so do not become frustrated if change does not occur overnight. Next, organization requires physical space — places to put the things being organized. And you will also need the proper tools. Too many people fail to become more productive simply because they do not have the tools they need to most effectively carry out the job.

Now, to complete the process of becoming better organized and more productive, here are some other important steps you must take.

• *Set clear, specific goals!* Indeed, if you do not have clearly stated goals you want to accomplish, there is no reason to become better organized. Without goals, it does not matter whether you are organized or not. Goals are the things which give purpose to life. Thus, your first step is to write down the goals you want to accomplish and set realistic deadlines for achieving them. Deadlines are important because goals without deadlines are just daydreams.

• *Devise a preliminary and more refined plan!* To the same extent that goals give purpose to life, plans give direction to life. Goals are merely a clear statement of what you want to accomplish. Plans are a set of statements on how to accomplish those goals. Initially, your plans will be preliminary. They will become more refined based upon actual experiences. These experiences, when objectively analyzed, will inform you as to which parts of your plan need to be changed or given greater emphasis.

• *Get the right tools!* It is a mistake to begin the tasks associated with achieving a goal without the proper tools. "Proper tools" may vary from an actual piece of physical equipment to gaining more education about a particular topic. Indeed, information is perhaps the most powerful of all tools. Getting the proper information means never being afraid or too proud to ask questions. Talk to people who have achieved what you are trying to achieve. If you cannot question them directly, read about them in self-help books and magazines. Learning from others is one of the most powerful ways to avoid mistakes.

• *Organize only what you need and get rid of the rest!* Only keep things you need to keep. When this is done, then you must have a place for everything and keep everything in its place. The only way to accomplish this is to set aside a half-hour each day for throwing away the unnecessary and organizing the necessary.

• *Do your own time-flow analysis!* To become more productive, you must know how your time is currently being spent. You must chart out a typical week detailing what you do and how much time you spend doing each and every task on the list. When that is done, ask yourself three effectiveness and efficiency questions:

a. Does this task really need to be done? You may be amazed at the number of things you are doing out of pure habit and don't need. Analyze each step of the task. You may be taking five steps to accomplish a task which could be done just as well in three.

b. If this task really needs to be done, am I the one who should be doing it? A lot of people have been dumped on. This means they are doing work or performing tasks which should be done by someone else. You must really be sure that what you are doing is something you should be doing. Secondly, a lot of people simply do not know how to say no to requests for favors. And third, a lot of people take on unnecessary work as a result of the theory: "If you want something done right, you have got to

do it yourself." This a questionable theory. But even if it is true, you cannot possibly do everything.

c. Finally, if this task must be done and I am the one who should be doing it, is there a way to do it in less time? The key point here is that you must always look for ways to do things in less time without sacrificing quality. If you do not look, you will not find.

• *Conquer procrastination!* Procrastination is perhaps the world's most self-defeating behavior. It is the reason most dreams dry up and wither away without ever being realized. The key to conquering procrastination is to be found in point No. 1: Having clear, powerful goals. Your goals give you the emotional energy to overcome procrastination. Give your goals emotional force. There is no other way to overcome procrastination.