



ORGANIZATION
& EFFICIENCY

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Introduction

Success does not always come to the most intelligent or talented people. It doesn't always come to the hardest working or most creative, either. The truth is that success is the result of persistence, focus, and organization. It's all about how well we manage our time.

I can almost hear your sigh now. For lots of you, getting organized or becoming more focused and efficient is like those other New Year's resolutions -- losing weight or getting fit -- that are in our rearview mirror now. We've been there, tried them, and aren't crazy about the results.

Sure, you have your reasons for avoiding getting organized, pretty good ones, too. I'll bet at least one of these applies to you:

- You're too busy. It takes time to get organized
- Too many people are demanding your time
- You've started organizing but just can't follow through
- You're not sure how to go about it
- It's too much trouble
- You're naturally untidy
- You just can't get motivated
- And so on

There's a lot of truth in those reasons for all of us -- more truth all the time. Our days are full of hundreds of demands on our time, energy, and emotions. Every minute is taken up with our duties and other people's demands. You've probably even thought about what you have to do to achieve more success but haven't taken any action.

Let's talk about organization and efficiency for a minute. Isn't it true that you want to get better at these things because you believe they will help you manage your personal and professional life more successfully? Really, they are a means to

that end. Keeping that in mind is the key to setting and achieving the goals that will bring you success. The better you can identify and target your unique goals, the more motivation you will have to keep moving toward them efficiently.

When you lose focus on exactly what you are driving toward, it's easy to lose motivation and stop working toward your goals. Also, if the goals concern things you think you "should" do or be or have instead of goals you are really committed to, you'll have much less chance of succeeding long term. That's why New Year's resolutions usually fail. And that's why any plan about organizing your life has to start with a self-analysis on your part. Does that make sense?

You need to know how to use the skills you have and which ones you need to acquire. Finally, you need to know how to organize to efficiently achieve your unique goals.

In this ebook you will create an organization plan based on what you want and the skills you'll need to get it. Here you'll learn a clear three-pronged approach you can customize to your individual situation. You'll learn

1. Unique core desires and goals
2. Skills and strategies to successfully work toward those goals
3. Start-to-finish organization steps to achieve your goals.

The first part might be the most important part of all. Part one is all about you getting to know yourself -- your goals, your real desires, your skills, your strengths and your weaknesses. The better you understand how you function, the better you'll be able to create the life you desire.

Second, we'll talk about methods for handling the internal and external forces in play in your life everyday. You'll learn the most effective methods and probably get some insight into ways you can improve your efficiency.

Finally, we'll go through the process, start-to-finish, of organizing projects. No matter what the project is, the general process to complete it is the same.

You need to understand and apply all three of these aspects, but if you do, the true benefits of organization will enhance every area of your life.

Who Are You Really?

Before you put into practice specific processes for achieving your goals, you need to do two things: first, get a realistic picture of yourself so that you can decide what you are capable of; and, second, decide what you want your goals to be.

First, redefine who you are underneath all the negative self-talk you bombard yourself with. Read this chapter and then answer the questions in the following chart, "Positive Picture of Me." At that point, you should be able to see yourself more clearly.

What We Say To Ourselves

Do you know what you want? It's not always easy to know what you want because we are all told from an early age the things we "should" want. We hear about the achievements of others and about their challenges and success, but we're not often encouraged to consider our own strengths, weaknesses, and accomplishments.

We can be overwhelmed by all the things we should be...

- Have more confidence
- Be healthy
- Be happy
- Be successful
- Get organized
- Be popular

I'm sure you can add your own list of items. Added up, they can all make you feel like it's too much work and that you're just not smart enough or competent enough to successfully plan your life. That's the wrong attitude.

Why give up and underestimate yourself because of what other people say? Instead, let's take a look at who you are and what

you have to work with. We all have skills and positive qualities. Start emphasizing your good qualities when you talk to yourself and think of your weak areas as things you need to improve on instead of things you can't do.

Have you ever thought about why people put themselves down? This might surprise you, but there's a payoff in it. People think it gives them the right to continue the negative behavior and not try to improve. So, how does that play out? For instance, if you say you can't dance, people will leave you alone and you won't have to learn, but you are angry at yourself because you know you're copping out, and you're envious of all the good dancers.

You can apply that to so many situations in business or in other areas of life. If you label yourself as a failure, you can stop trying...but you're not happy about it.

What Others Say To Us

Not only do we undermine ourselves with our negative self-talk, but there are plenty of other people willing to do it for us with their criticism. Am I right? Let me tell you one thing that stops you from paying much attention to them ever again. Most of the time when people put you down, it's because they're not feeling good about themselves. They feel inadequate and want to make themselves feel better by making you feel inadequate. That's all there is to it! Don't listen to them.

Here's the key. You can't please everyone...there are way too many people out there with opinions. Who should you please? Yourself, of course. To do that, you need to figure out what you like and what you don't like. Then you have to start living up to these demands.

Below, you will find a chart, "Positive Picture of Me," where you can make some lists that will help you define what's positive about you.

POSITIVE PICTURE OF YOU

Think of all the things you like about yourself. Consider mental, physical, personality, talents, and abilities. List everything that comes to mind. This list allows for five, but I'm sure you have many more.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Make a list of all the things you have already achieved. Again, it's probably more than five.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Make a list of people you consider to be friends, mentors, or "on your side."

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Make a list of compliments you have received. (By the way, believe them. They were sincere, so accept them.)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Think of all the negative things you say about yourself -- to yourself or out loud. Now, disagree with yourself! For instance, "I can't do anything." "No, that's not true. I haven't learned to do this particular thing, but I can and will learn it."

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Defining Your Goals

Now that you have a clear, positive assessment of your personality, let's define the set of goals that best suit you. Remember that success is fulfilling your potential in your own eyes, not according to anyone else.

To do that, you need to define what success means to you in every area.

1. My definition of success is

2. I will fulfill my potential in my career when

3. I will fulfill my potential in my relationships when

4. I will fulfill my potential regarding my health and fitness when

5. I will fulfill my long-term goals when

7 Common Obstacles to Efficiency

Now that you have a realistic, positive picture of yourself and have defined personal goals which will maximize your potential, let's look at some common obstacles that hold people back.

It's common for people to have a problem with one or more of the following behaviors when trying to organize a task or project. If you are aware that you are prone to any of these, you can combat it by confronting your attitude and taking proper action.

PROCRASTINATION

It can be tempting to put things off by waiting for something to happen, or letting someone else start the process, etc., but this is really a lack of taking responsibility. The reality is that the longer you put things off, the less likely they will be done successfully. It becomes more difficult to start and more difficult to complete the project, and the project looms larger and larger as time goes on. How many times have you finished something and said, "That wasn't as bad as I thought it would be."

If procrastination is one of your problems, ask yourself why you are procrastinating. Is it a pattern for you? If so, can you tell if it's because of lack of confidence or if it's just something you don't want to tackle? Is there a common thread?

How can you combat this behavior? Can someone else help you to initiate it? Can you develop skills to combat your anxiety? Is it a project that you really don't want to do and don't need to do, so the best course would be to drop it and go on to another project?

ALL OR NOTHING THINKING

Sometimes a project can seem so large it is daunting, which can make it seem even larger than it is. Of course, every project can be broken down once it is understood whether you are working by yourself or there are others involved.

You need to analyze the task and set objectives and then make a plan of action and schedule. Then review the tasks as they are being accomplished, adjusting deadlines and reallocating tasks when necessary.

FAILING TO SET GOALS

Some of us have a natural ambivalence to setting goals, preferring to "live free," But goal setting is critical to effective project implementation. Research shows that the most successful people always set goals and that 90% of people who set goals achieve them. The secret is to set goals in a way that is aligned with your personality.

FEAR OF FAILURE

Many people have an inaccurate idea that everything we attempt should be perfect and that failure is embarrassing or shameful. Of course, that's not true. Most of the time, we learn a lot more from our failures than from our successes. We know this but continue to blame ourselves. Some positive self-talk comes in handy here.

COMPARING YOURSELF TO OTHERS

This behavior has always existed but has become more prevalent with social media. It's done in school, at work, and in

social situations with a negative effect on our confidence. It can discourage us and even paralyze us.

Again, logically we know that we're good at some things and not as good as others at other things. This is our chance to combat our counterproductive criticism with reminders of our skills and times when we performed successfully.

INEFFECTIVE TIME MANAGEMENT

Failure to prioritize and manage time efficiently is a key problem for many people, especially entrepreneurs. It's easy to give in to distractions and interruptions, which can result in disaster. Fortunately, planning is a learned skill that can turn things around if you commit to it.

LACK OF NECESSARY SKILLS

Sometimes, it's true -- we do lack necessary skills. The incorrect response to that fact is lack of confidence. The correct response is to identify the skill that is lacking and decide if it's one we want to work on improving or if we want to delegate or outsource where that skill is concerned. We have choices, and lacking a particular skill is not a dead end.

Key Success Skills

At this point, you should have an appreciation of your unique, real value, you've defined your goals, you've recorded your daily activities for a week, and you've analyzed your time log to find time sappers that you can remove or reorganize to become more proficient.

We've discussed the common obstacles to efficiency. Before you formulate your action plan, we'll discuss the skills that will enhance your efficiency and organizational abilities.

MOTIVATION AND WILLPOWER

Motivation is one of the most important ingredients in any project. Doesn't it make more sense that your project will be more successful if you really want to do it?

Willpower takes you a long way as a project goes on, especially when you're trying to make changes in your behavior. Many people want to accomplish a certain thing, but can't get started or lose steam as the project goes on.

Motivation and willpower can work together for successful completion of a project. For example, Frank has admired his coworker, Sue, for a long time but has been too shy to talk to her. The Christmas party is in one month. Frank thinks he could find the confidence to talk to Sue if he could lose some weight. He decides to lose 10 pounds by the Christmas party. He eats right, works out, and loses 10 pounds...and talks to Sue. Home run! Sue might have liked Frank anyway, but he would never have known if he didn't build up the confidence to talk to her.

TALKING BACK TO YOUR NEGATIVE VOICE

Negative self-talk is common; everyone does it to some extent. How successfully we talk back to it determines how successful we are in life. It's a little sneaky, though, because it comes in different forms:

- Catastrophising: "If I don't know all the answers they want, they won't be impressed, and I won't get the loan."
- Magnifying: "This is so hard, I can't do it."
- Self-punishment: "That was the most stupid thing I did -- I'm a fool."
- Negative self-labeling: "I'm old, useless, and ugly."
- Self-pressuring: "I should," "I must," "I have to."

The first step in countering this negativity is to be aware of it. Then you can challenge it by asking yourself if it's true or justified. Finally, replace it with positive, supportive self-talk. This will give you a positive self-image and the confidence to go on with your project.

You've already made a list of your good qualities and accomplishments. Recall these and add to them when negative self-talk rears its nasty head in your mind.

ASSERTIVENESS

Even if we are self-employed, we constantly work with others in the form of customers, colleagues, employees, and outsourcers. We can react in one of four ways: being passive, being aggressive, being manipulative, and being assertive.

Being passive often means waiting for others to take action before we move on a project. This leaves the fate of your project in the hands of others. The passive person has such low self-esteem that he either automatically agrees with others or even runs away.

Being aggressive usually means that we move without considering others' feelings or ideas, which can cause resentment. Aggressive behavior is competitive; the goal is to win over others.

Being manipulative means getting what we want through devious means and making others feel guilty. It is indirect aggression. Manipulative people fear exposure if they are direct and feel it's safer to control and manipulate rather than confronting and being rejected.

Being assertive involves having respect for the people we work with. It is rooted in high self-esteem and is most likely to give us the results we desire. We don't wait for others to act for us, we don't act without consideration for others when necessary, and we don't try to indirectly control and manipulate others. Instead, assertive people negotiate to reach win-win results.

It might surprise you to know that we all use all four patterns at times. These behaviors are established in us from an early age, and we may not be aware when we're using them. But with some awareness and determination, we can change these behaviors if we want to.

Identifying the best behavior to use in various situations can contribute substantially to the success of projects.

The way to encourage assertive behavior in yourself is to

- Be very clear about what you want
- Feel positive about your project
- Take initiative

Thinking through what you want and planning the steps might seem time consuming, but the rewards are great.

The way to successfully behave assertively with others involves

- Knowing clearly what you want and feel and being prepared to state that directly and simply.
- Maintaining your position steadily without giving in to manipulation or the negative behavior of others.
- Acknowledge that you hear manipulators' statements and continue with your point of view or request without becoming defensive or aggressive.
- Negotiating to achieve a win-win when there is conflict. Compromising to get the best realistic position is the right thing to do for the success of the project.

HANDLING CONFRONTATION

Sometimes situations arise where agreement hasn't been reached on legitimate differences of opinion through means other than confrontation. Continued disagreement is a saboteur of efficiency, so the issues need to be aired, but this tactic should be used with care. To skillfully approach confrontation you should

- Acknowledge the other person's point of view as legitimate
- Clearly state both positions
- Make sure that the other person agrees that both of your positions have been stated correctly
- Accept that there may be negative feelings involved on both sides and accept responsibility for your own feelings
- Ask the other person for his preferred solution.

At this point, you both may be able to start working toward a compromise.

MANAGING YOUR ANGER AND FRUSTRATION

In most undertakings, there are times where things don't work out as we expected or where obstacles arise. If we don't deal with our anger and frustration, those negative feelings can slow us down or even derail the project. Luckily, effective strategies allow us to manage and channel our negative feelings.

1. Be aware of your feelings. This is not always easy. We've learned to deny our feelings in many cases to be socially appropriate. But feelings denied can go underground and sabotage you. Know what you're feeling and why you're feeling the way you do.
2. Then decide what to do with the feeling. It's better not to express your anger until you have control of it. First recognize it, then control it, then decide how to handle it.
3. Convert your anger to energy that powers your projects and inspires changes.
4. Express your anger (energy) in a safe form such as exercise.
5. After you are in control of it, voice your anger directly and fairly.
6. Confront the situation that caused your anger in the most constructive way you can think of.
7. After you've dealt with your anger, release it.

PLANNING

Goals are at the core of organization and efficiency since they keep us focused. A clear plan of action with effective implementation takes us from an idea to a completed project.

Planning assures that each part of a project receives proper attention.

- Understand your project thoroughly
- Know your resources -- human and material
- Be flexible in order to make changes
- Be proactive
- Schedule based on the needs of the project and your own abilities

TIME MANAGEMENT

Time management is critical to efficiency and optimum organization of your business. Actually, if you can't master this, you absolutely won't be as successful as you could be, no matter how good you are at anything else. Time management should be done every day with your focus on taking care of your important and urgent tasks and minimizing or delegating time sapping tasks.

An excellent management tool for time management is your daily action plan. We'll be talking about that in the next chapter.

Here are some time-saving tips to help you work more efficiently and effectively:

Take On Less

- Learn to say "no"
- Delegate
- Eliminate unnecessary meetings
- Don't take on issues others should be doing
- Don't get bogged down with details except when it's necessary to do so

Work Efficiently

- Make and meet deadlines
- Tackle tasks as soon as you can
- Tackle tasks when you are most alert
- Make deadlines for others who tend to procrastinate
- Keep communications short and to the point
- Make phone calls when they will save time

Work Effectively

- Make a plan and stick to it
- Be realistic
- Plan anything that will take some time -- phone calls, written communication, meetings
- Take breaks -- they revive you
- Set priorities
- Finish what you start each day

EFFECTIVE DELEGATION

If you're an entrepreneur in internet marketing, you may have a minimum of delegating to do, but you might have an admin, a writer, some outsourcers, etc. now or at some time in the future. When you delegate, you enlarge the scope of your business, increase your productivity, and in all likelihood, increase your profits. There's a skill to delegating which, if you master, will maximize everyone's efforts.

The thing you must decide first is which things to delegate and which things to keep for yourself. To answer that question, you must thoroughly understand the project and its demands.

To help you do this

1. Set the objectives for the task

2. Decide on the standards you require
3. Determine the best people for the tasks and how much training they will need
4. Establish realistic deadlines
5. Set up review points to analyze the progress.

The best things to delegate:

- Routine matters
- Tasks requiring special knowledge you don't have

Things not to delegate:

- Anything you need to do personally
- Emergency tasks
- Tasks that are exceptions to the normal method of doing things
- Tasks that might have serious repercussions

HANDLING STRESS

We all have stress, and if we're not careful, it can kill us. More and more studies are showing that stress is a component in many major diseases. If we don't handle our stress, it can also cause problems in our business.

Stress comes from four sources. These are called stressors.

1. Situational stressors come from our situation, our environment, and our culture. Work would be one of these, as well as unexpected situations, bad news, change, and noise.
2. Major life events such as marriage, death, divorce, birth, ill health, or financial problems.
3. Other people can be stressors if they have unreal demands or expectations.

4. Internal stressors like perfectionism, feelings of inadequacy, or unmet needs can be the biggest stressors of the four.

Learning to handle stress can make you healthier and happier, and it can certainly help you to run your business more efficiently. The first step is identifying when you are feeling stressful. Here are the questions to ask yourself at that time:

1. What's causing this stress?
2. When does it happen?
3. What exactly am I feeling now?
4. Why am I reacting this way?
5. What can I do to reduce my feelings of stress in this particular situation?

Here are some coping behaviors to help you handle stress:

- Accept your stressful feelings. They are valuable because they tell you that something is wrong that you need to pay attention to.
- Practice coping skills like saying "no," taking initiative, developing a sense of personal power, and taking responsibility.
- Establish a supportive network of people who are interested in your well being.
- Build a healthy lifestyle which combines good nutrition, exercise, relaxation, non-smoking, and moderate alcohol and caffeine.
- Realize that there are some things that you can't control and let them go.

MAINTAINING HIGH SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is essential to resilience. It allows us to believe we can withstand all the problems of life. It definitely assists us in running our business efficiently.

There are two types of self-esteem: internal and external. Internal comes from inside you: it's what you think of yourself. External comes from what others think of you. It's not very reliable since what others think of you can change.

As your efficiency in all areas of your life grows, so will your self-esteem. In addition, there are strategies to help you increase your internal self-esteem:

- Take initiative
- Develop motivation and willpower
- Take risks
- Give yourself "me" time
- Challenge your negative thoughts
- Be assertive
- Celebrate your improvements

Organize for Success

Now that you've taken a look at your personality strengths and weaknesses, your personal and professional goals, common obstacles to efficiency, and some success skills, it's time to set up your first action plan.

First, make a list of all the things you'd like to reorganize or change in order to achieve greater efficiency. It could be quite a large number of things: clearing the clutter from your desk, setting specific times to handle e-mails, beginning to clean up your inbox, etc. If you're like most people, you have a long list. Right now, write down everything that comes to mind without thinking about what is most important versus less important.

Imagine operating at peak performance level. Then take a look at all aspects of your business or life and how you function right now. Think about all the things you need to add and all the things you need to change or discontinue in order to achieve your vision of peak performance. Write everything down, no matter how minor it seems.

The next step is prioritizing your changes. This is an absolutely individual thing. You could start with things you believe most urgently need changing, or you could start with some things that are relatively easy to do, just to get you started and to get them out of the way.

CRITERIA FOR PRIORITIZING

You can prioritize based on various criteria:

1. Importance – the important items are the ones that will bring you the biggest payoff.
2. Urgency – these items will have the most serious results if you don't get them done.

3. Quickest benefit – these will bring results for you very soon.

4. Most difficult – this is the most difficult item on your list, and you want to do it first to get it out of the way.

5. First domino effect – this item needs to be done first because you can't change other things until you change it.

6. Desire – these are the items you most want to change.

We talked about goal setting previously, and you defined your own personal and unique goals in every area of your life. Now we need to talk about how you will achieve your goals on a day by day basis. Only 5% of people ever set goals of any kind. But more than 90% of people who do set goals achieve them. The combination of setting very specific goals and having a daily action plan that helps you achieve them is the core system for you to successfully organize your life.

It's the written attention to the details of your activity on a day-to-day basis that will allow you to succeed. We are always too busy to remember accurately everything we do. When it's written down, we can track our activity and analyze it. So, this may take some time, especially at first, but it is worth the trouble.

Again, write down everything you want to change, organize better, or become more efficient at. Be very specific. Break down the tasks into the smallest pieces possible.

Your Daily Action Plan (see Action Plan form) should be in front of you at all times. It's your primary tool for staying on track to accomplish your goals. Even though it takes a little time for you to complete it, it has benefits for you right from the start. It will help you.

- Reduce stress because since you planned your day already you'll be working at top efficiency.

- Improve productivity since your priorities are clear from the beginning of the day.
- Make clear progress toward your goals since your actions are mapped out for you.
- Help you achieve balance between all parts of your life since you scheduled work time and you have unscheduled time for the other areas of your life.

Furthermore, if you become more adept at using your time effectively and as you begin to see progress, you'll become inspired to do even better!

Now go to the Action Plan form and begin to fill it out. Complete a five day action plan. This will give you the most data to work with.

Guidelines for Identifying Your Time Sappers

Have you ever spent an entire day busy at your computer and felt like you achieved nothing at the end of it? Many times? You have company!

By now you should have kept a time log of exactly how you spent your time each day, preferably for a week, so you have lots of data to work with. The next step is to analyze the data to discover exactly which time sappers are interfering with your productivity.

Time sappers are all the distractions and interruptions of any kind that take you away from working on your priority tasks and projects. Studies have shown that the things that kill your efficiency fall into four areas:

- Lack of planning
- Lack of organization
- Lack of self-management
- Lack of managing the work environment

LACK OF PLANNING

1. No written goals
2. Indecisiveness
3. Unrealistic time estimates
4. Inefficient use of waiting time
5. Too much work for time allotted
6. Poor decisions
7. Failure to break down tasks completely
8. Not enough review at steps during process

DISORGANIZATION

1. General disorganization (messy desk, unworkable filing)
2. Procrastination
3. Unfinished tasks

LACK OF SELF-MANAGEMENT

1. Taking on too much
2. Not enough delegation
3. Not saying "no"
4. Perfectionism
5. Media surfing
6. Poor self-discipline
7. Faulty listening and note taking
8. Absenteeism or lateness

LACK OF MANAGING THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

1. Drop-in visitors
2. Media and phone interruptions
3. Unnecessary paperwork
4. Unnecessary meetings
5. Confusing directions

Use this list in conjunction with your time log to decide which sappers show up in your day. Make a note of that next to the item on the time log. Identifying it is the first step. Next, begin to eliminate the items. Some will probably be easier to get rid of than others. Some may have become habits that are hard to break. But make a start. For instance, if your weaknesses is surfing the internet, cut down the amount of time you spend doing that per day or only do it at a set time during the day.

It may be easier for you to eliminate these time sappers a few at a time or one at a time, but write down a date when you will address each one and then do it.

Review your list from time to time to see that you're making progress. Making these changes will be worth it when you see the increase in your productivity.

Replacing Old Habits with New Habits

One problem with trying to achieve better organization and become more efficient is that old habits have a very strong pull on all of us. Whether it's good for us or bad for us, we get comfortable with our old routine and our old ways. Change is difficult, and it's even harder when we think that we're giving up something we like.

Studies have shown that the best way to give up an old habit is to replace it with a new one. For instance, people who are trying to give up smoking often replace that habit by doing something with their hands, such as woodworking or knitting. People who are trying to lower their sugar intake substitute low sugar food items for the high sugar things they used to eat.

That's one reason following an action plan that's already completed can work well. Instead of spending the first hour of every day, for instance, doing e-mail, you've already dedicated that hour to beginning a project. So, all you have to do is sit down at your desk and start working. If you have a problem with procrastination, you don't even have to think about whether you want to do something – it's there in your action plan, so you do it.

GOOD HABIT BOOSTERS

If you're one of those people who have an extremely difficult time with breaking old habits, here are some tips that might work for you:

1. **Break one habit at a time.** If change is very difficult for you, focus on just one change at a time. Replace an old habit with a new one, one habit at a time and stick with that one change until you feel comfortable that you won't go back to your old habit. Habits are not easy to break, and some are much harder

than others. You might disagree, but think about how often you tweet or check your Facebook page. That probably makes the point very clear to some of you. (Ha ha.)

2. **Small habits.** Here's another tip for making changes in a more gentle way. I only need to remind you of New Year's resolutions here. You probably know that gym memberships are at their peak at New Year's and that most people never use those memberships. The people who do use them drop off after the first month. For a lot of people it's just too much of a change. They have to give up their free time, get themselves to the gym, and then actually exercise. It all seems like a good idea, but then reality sets in.

It's much better to start by trying to change a smaller habit – for instance, cut your coffee drinking from 6 cups to 2 cups a day. You might have more success with that than trying to cut out coffee completely. The point is that if you have 20 things you'd like to change and change is difficult for you, start with one small thing. This will give you confidence to go on to bigger items.

3. **Focus on starting.** For instance, if you're very out of shape and haven't exercised for a while, don't set your goal at running a marathon. Maybe it's a good long-term goal, but in the short term, walking or running around the block is something you might be able to do without getting so discouraged that you'll quit. Just get started. So many people fail, not because they don't have big dreams and good intentions, but because they just can't get started. Many times if people just start something, they realize it's not as hard as they were afraid it would be.

4. **Don't miss two straight days.** Get back on the horse. For instance, you don't enjoy filling out your action plan and you not sure it's worth the trouble, so you skip a day. That's really not being fair yourself. If you haven't seen progress in your organization and efficiency, it's very likely because you haven't

been at it long enough. Getting off-track for one day and getting back on track is a lot better than quitting. Don't quit.

General Efficiency and Organizational Tips

1. Keep Everything in It's Place – Sounds simple but actually practicing it takes will power and consistency so you can form a habit.
2. Keep a To-Do List – Every morning break down your 3 most important tasks and focus on them until they are finished.
3. Simplify your surroundings – clean up clutter!
4. Put things away when you are done using them! Why wait and clutter your work area?
5. Figure out what time of day you are at your personal peak – schedule important tasks for that time.
6. For a more efficient day – simply get up earlier.
7. Set deadlines for your own personal tasks and strive to meet them.
8. Don't be afraid to take control of your time. Focus on the tasks that YOU need to complete.
9. Keep your working area tidy.
10. Find office or household items that have more than one use – unless required, avoid specialty tools that only have one single use.
11. Be decisive! Don't over think things – make a clear cut decision and follow it.
12. Always plan your tasks ahead. A little planning at the start will save a lot of time in the long run.
13. Batch up your tasks. It can be more efficient to do similar tasks all at once. Try saving all of your phone calls for a certain time for example.
14. Commit to changing problem behaviors. If you are really honest with yourself you will be able to pinpoint daily activities that keep you from being organized.
15. Make the time. If you are a busy person then schedule some organizing time right into your daily calendar.
16. Outsource. If there is a task that you hate doing (even organization itself) then outsource it to a company that specializes in it.

17. Don't forget the ultimate organization tool – the trash can. Throw out anything you don't need and you will never have to “organize” it.
18. For efficiency purposes work in time “power blocks”. Focus and work hard on a task for 45 minutes and then break for 5 (or a similar type time split).
19. Use online tools! Start Here but there are tons out there – do a Google search.
20. Just start. Start getting organized and developing habits that will improve your efficiency. It can be a struggle, but persistence and a positive attitude will help you persevere.

Conclusion

As you work on improving your organizational abilities and efficiency, you will have many successes and some failures along the way. You can learn from both of these.

When your changes don't work out as well or as quickly as you'd like, write down what you think is the reason for the failure and what you can try differently. Don't be embarrassed by it. Creating new habits is hard for almost everyone. Share your difficulties in changing with a friend. She may have some ideas about what might work for you. Try again.

Take a minute to celebrate your successes. As you see your business begin to improve and your days flow more smoothly, that is a celebration in itself. Acknowledge your growing skills. This reinforces your self-esteem. Reward yourself in some way. Put yourself first. This has taken great effort, effort you'll continue to make in the future. Accept any compliments you receive.

Your ability to handle your successes and failures well will give motivation to continue to improve even more in the future.