

PERSONAL ORGANIZATION: STOP REPEATING MISTAKES

By Denise Landers

Stupidity: Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

No one should be billing themselves as stupid. After all you are operating in a very high-paced world, handling multiple demands on your time, and still producing good work. Yet if you are operating in this mode and are feeling stressed and unproductive because your To-Do list and daily stacks keep growing, then you may be exemplifying that definition.

Are you using the same techniques that you used last year and four years ago to manage your phone calls, your email, and your long-term projects? If you are, chances are that is the reason you are having to cope with stress each day. An increased pace at work along with new technology demands that you have a method for integrating changes.

In my consulting work, as I assess office productivity, I might find that one person is using four or five different systems to manage their daily tasks. That person might have learned of a new system but still kept parts of the older one instead of transitioning everything. The end result is that, with multiple systems, none of them works.

The first thing is to determine which ONE system in each area would produce the most efficient results. The system can be paper-based or electronic-based. Deciding which depends on both your comfort level with electronics and the format of the information that is coming into your work area.

Below are some **evaluation questions** to use in determining whether or not an area needs to be examined so you can improve daily productivity.

- **Email processing** - Do you empty your inbox at least once a week?
- **Paper processing** - Do you leave your office each evening with a cleared desk?
- **Filing** - Can you find any item within seconds?
- **Scheduling** - Do you maintain all of your appointments on one calendar.
- **Tasks** - Are you writing everything down and committing to a time or location?
- **Quality** - Does your office reflect the quality of your work?

Within each category, decide:

- What is working for you?
- What is not working for you?

If it is not working, do not continue on in the same mode for the next two or three years because you "don't have time" to make changes. You cannot afford to retain the same ineffective processes with the increasing workloads that you have to manage. If you proceed with the same routines, the end result is that lack of productivity and stress.

It is not hard to decide whether you want to epitomize the definition of "stupid" or "smart." The key is making the commitment to be sure you are demonstrating the characteristic that matches your ability. Slight changes can make an immediate difference in how you feel about your work and how others see you.

The average business person is wasting over one hour per day due to disorganization. In many cases, two hours is more common. Over a year that adds up to 6 -12 weeks of lost time. Learn the tools and techniques for good time management that will make you efficient and productive - and let you go home on time each evening with a cleared desk.