



Paper Management In the Workplace

Simplify managing your paper in your workplace by using the 'Five times Three' method: Five steps in three categories. Here's how to break it down:

Five Incoming "Documents"

Most paper generally comes into your workplace in one of five ways:

1. Paper: All mail, papers from work, travel, meetings and workshops
2. E-mail: On your e-mail or printed out on paper
3. Voice mail: Hand written from a phone message
4. Verbal requests: From the boss/coworker/client that ends up as paper
5. Your work: Your own work/projects/ideas in the form of paper, books and magazines.

The Five Decisions

Narrow down your decisions by making one of five choices for all incoming documents:

1. Discard/Delete: A must to staying organized. Trust your judgment: do I have time to read, to take care of, or to waste on this?
2. Delegate/Forward: Should or can you delegate this to a coworker? It may not be done 'your' way, but it's one less thing on your desk.
3. Take immediate action: If it takes 60 seconds (general guideline) or less to complete, **do it now**. This is another basic premise to staying organized.
4. To be filed: No action required, but needed for future reference. Place in one basket to file later in a simple and long-term filing system.
5. Needs follow-up: Additional work (that takes more than 60 seconds) is necessary (see below).

Five Follow-Up Categories

Keep follow-up documents in follow-up file folders off your desk, but close by until you need to work on it. These files are a fluid filing system (not long-term) located somewhere off your desk in a separate file drawer:

1. 1-31 files: File follow-up documents in the day of the month it must be done. Pull that paperwork each day to work on it.
2. January-December files: File documents for long-term projects. This includes reading material. When the next month comes up, put in the 1-31 file folders.
3. Boss, Significant Other, Meeting and 'Other' files: When you think of issues for the boss, your significant other, a regular meeting (weekly, monthly, etc.), or other categories you designate, put them in these files to refer to later. For your staff, place these papers in 1-31 files.
4. Casual reading material: Create a portable version of 'it would be nice when I get time' reading file. Grab it when you can read it on the go.
5. Waiting for response file: File documents you are waiting for a response from someone. Clean out daily and file in 1-31 if necessary.