

Getting a Grip on Time Robyn Pearce of TimeLogic

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Contents:

1. How to store your 'Current Action' paperwork off the desk - and find it in half the time!
2. News and coming events
3. New recommended titles
4. A reader's tip - Are you a bee or a mosquito?

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1. How to store your 'Current Action' paperwork off the desk - and find it in half the time!

If you actioned last month's tips you've sorted out the mess masquerading as your 'important' paperwork. Hopefully you've found good homes for everything, but let's suppose there are still some random piles lurking.

The next stage is to get things into the most logical place, which may not necessarily be its old spot. 'Where?' is the issue.

With this tip, let's just take time to plan the immediate work - your Current Action. How do you file it so you can find it in a flash?

If you're like many paper-battlers, the temptation is to go back to the old way - stacking everything on top of everything else, probably on top of your desk, or in an in-tray. The 'rationale' for this very common habit is that something

under your nose won't be forgotten. Bad thinking. Only about 20% manage an in-tray or a 'pile' efficiently. Most confess that the layers just get deeper and deeper, with 'urgent' things overlaid by more urgent matters; the result, of course, is mislaid items.

Remember the principle we covered last month - 'The space closest to you is your most precious'? One of the most under-utilized pieces of furniture in modern offices is the file drawer right beside your knee. (If you don't yet have a desk with a suspension drawer, the same principles apply, even if it's the standard old 3-drawer system. Only difference is your Action drawer files are laid flat instead of vertically hung and quickly sighted.)

Back to the small suspension file drawer, if that's what you've got. Typically people snuggle all manner of (I was going to say 'junk', but perhaps 'inappropriate' is more accurate!) things in here, and yet it's their most precious space.

Instead of the running shoes, the ginger biscuits, the whisky bottle, the handbag or the obsolete files, a smart operator uses this wonderful space with wisdom. They have, at the front, a file labelled 'Action - Current' where their current action (of course) quietly sits, right at their finger tips but not cluttering the desk.

Behind the Action file they place their current project files, alphabetically labelled and sorted.

Behind the project files they cap off this vision of glory with another really useful file. You can have fun naming it, but I've seen it called titles like:

'Safety Net',
'1/2 Way to File 13' (alias the rubbish bin), or
'1/2 Way to the Bin'.

The value of this file far outweighs the importance of its contents. Basically, it's a safety net for the wonderful miscellany that you 'might need' and can't quite risk ditching - yet! Because you do have to dig in there occasionally, it never gets too full - as long as you throw away what has become obsolete when you touch it.

Are you reading this with a knot of anxiety churning in the pit of your stomach? Are you saying, 'But if I put things in the drawer, instead of leaving them on my desk, I'll forget them'? or 'I'll never see them again'?

Two very simple steps and you can sleep at night.

1. Record in your diary or organizer when you need to start any task which has been placed in this 'Action - Current' file. (And of course you're checking your diary every day!)

2. Then there's a physical reminder. Every day, pull out the file and flick through. Anything which may otherwise slip through the net is eye-balled, you're reminded of its presence at the same time, and if for some reason it's not on your list for the day, physically re-arrange the order of the papers in that file. Then, should there be a small gap or serendipitous gift of time, when you lift out the file from the drawer the most important matters are smiling at you from the top of the pile.

Next issue we'll give you some alternatives, if you're seriously visual and just can't bring yourself to put your paperwork out of eye-range.

(For heaps more useful tips on the topic, check out my new book 'Getting a Grip on the Paper War - Managing information in the modern office'.

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/books.html>)

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2. News and Coming Events

'Getting a Grip on the Paper War' - Seminars in the Bay of Plenty, New Zealand

If you'd like some face-to-face help, and you're in either Tauranga, Whakatane or Rotorua, I'll be presenting at fun-filled practical seminars in all three places this week.

Tauranga: Thursday 13th November 8am - 9.30am
Book with Joanne - Tauranga Chamber of Commerce, 07 577 9823

Whakatane: Thursday 13th November 5.30-7pm
Book with Tania - Eastern Bay of Plenty Chamber & Enterprise Training, 07 308 6722

Rotorua: Friday Friday 14th November 9 - 11am
Book with Rotorua Chamber of Commerce, 07 349 6126

Dunedin in December

Some of the folk who heard me in Dunedin in September have requested a return visit. If you're in that region (or even Christchurch) and want some help, I'll be down your way the first week in December. Flick an email to robyn@gettingagripontime.com and I'll see if we can fit you in. (Good chance to share the travel costs!)

A New Service

Since the launch of 'Getting a Grip on the Paper War' a lot of firms have asked for consulting help for their 'paper-challenged' senior staff members. To meet the need we've worked out a simple package which returns huge value. If you think about it, one key person with poor paper and information-management skills can have a huge negative impact on a firm's cash-flow - and we can change their behaviour in a very short time.

If you'd like to know the details of the consultancy package, drop me a quick note - robyn@gettingagripontime.com

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3. New Recommended Titles

From time to time I come across great products by other writers that I think may be of interest to you. So - as an extra service we'll now provide them for you on our secure website.

Relationships:

'Share a dream - 21 steps to love that works' by Susan Huysamen.

Quality relationships are something we all desire. And if we haven't got a happy one, how much time is wasted in emotional trauma and distress? If we say, 'I don't have time for that relationship stuff', it really means 'It's not a priority'.

If that's the way it is at your place, and if that's not ok;
if you feel as though you live in a war zone;
or a niggling thought says there must be more to relationships

than what you're experiencing;

- then this excellent workbook is for you.

I was most impressed with the layout and easy methods Susan has created - a time-saver in itself. You'll find 21 enlightening but simple and easily applied steps to enhance your relationship. Or, if you're beginning a new one, there's no better time to tap into these great ideas.

How to build high performing teams

Ann Andrews is an Australasian specialist in turning dysfunctional teams into totally accountable and high-producing work units. She works across both New Zealand and Australia with many of the largest corporates, and her common-sense techniques work just as well in small organisations.

I believe these two titles should be on every manager's bookshelf.

'Shift your But'

Ann shares with you the steps towards thriving in business instead of merely surviving.

She challenges organisations to:

Release management time by at least 30% so the managers can work on the business instead of in the business;

Move from Parent/Child attitudes into Adult/Adult transactions;

Rethink the way they view work;

Create an ownership rather than a dependency mentality

'Finding the Square Root of a Banana'

In this eminently practical book, Ann asks the provocative question - 'is it possible to turn whinging, whining, back-stabbing groups into highly focused, highly energised, totally accountable teams?'

In her words - absolutely. And to prove it, in her latest book Ann takes you through the actual steps she uses to do just this.

And then of course there's my books. You'll find a full list of my books, tapes, online course, and ebooks at <http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/index.html>

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You love a bargain? Check out <http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/bargains.html>

And 'Getting a Grip on Life - Goals Toolkit', the easy goal-setting, life-balance, appraisal and career planning tool that came out a few months ago, is also there for you - it's been burning holes in the postal system as orders fly in. <http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/goals-toolkit.html>

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4. Are you a bee or a mosquito?

Thanks to Nick Read, Training for Change, who posted this on our Discussion Board:

"It's not so much how busy you are, but why you are busy. The bee is praised. The mosquito is swatted." - Mary O'Connor.

(If you'd like to ask questions, add inspirational thoughts or post your own Best Practice ideas, hit the Discussion Board button at <http://www.gettingagripontime.com>)

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Want more help with time tips and strategies? Check out the back issues of these Top Time Tips, or the Discussion Board.

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/ttt/index.html>

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P. O. Box 25 823, St. Heliers, Auckland, New Zealand
Ph +(64) 9 521 2126

admin@gettingagripontime.com
<http://www.gettingagripontime.com>