

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION FILES! Organizing Your Office By Task

Your desk is the most important part of your office. It is a work space, however many people make the mistake of using the desk as a storage space! In order for you to be focused on the task at hand, the desk should be clear and free of distractions, such as piles of paper, books, notes, bills, etc. How can you manage these items without losing them, find the information you need to work on, and still have a clear work space?

Action files! Action files are merely temporary homes where papers live until they either end up filed away permanently or thrown away. Your action files may sit on the far corner of your desktop, they might be in your file drawer, or in baskets on the credenza. Whichever method works for you is fine. Label them according to what actions fit best with your industry. (ex: CALL BACK, TO FILE, TO READ, TO MAIL, TO PAY, etc) Clearly label your files so you will always know what is in them, and just as importantly, the labels will remind you *what not to put in them*.

An important add-on to your action files is a HOLDING file. This will be a key player in the organization of your office space, as it will hold all the information that requires an action some time in the future, rather than immediately. For example, if you get an invitation and map to a seminar you'd like to attend in a few months, how do you keep that information without losing it or forgetting about the event entirely? This is precisely where the "Holding file" comes into play.

You simply mark in your calendar the date you wish to take action and what the action will be (ex: September 5, Marketing Seminar at the Hilton) then you make an "H" next to what you've written, which is a visual indicator that the information pertaining to this event is living in your Holding file. The key to using your Holding file effectively is that you *must use it in conjunction with your calendar*. It's a dual system: the note in the calendar reminds you of the action you need to take, and the "H" next to the note reminds you of where the details of the information are being stored. Once the action is taken, remove the physical information from the Holding file and either file it or throw it away.

Some examples of what to keep in a Holding file:

- Airline tickets and itineraries
- Party/seminar invitations
- Directions to events
- Letters to follow-up on
- Auto tag registration

In short, your Holding file is a temporary home for anything with an action deadline either in the near or distant future. The system gives you a way to safely put things out of your mind until it's necessary to think of them again, thereby freeing your mind up to focus on your immediate priorities.

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