



WORKING WELL

Declutter Your Spaces— Declutter Your Mind!

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Decluttering one's living and work spaces as well as decluttering one's mind are important aspects to overall well-being and efficient work practices and production.

Physical Spaces (work and home): Having an organized, uncluttered, and clean environment facilitates creativity, clear thinking, and an overall sense of peace. Some tips to declutter one's physical environment are:

1. Take stock of items and accumulated "stuff" (e.g., papers, tchotchkes) in the office and at home to formulate a plan as to what area(s) to tackle first.
2. Start organizing small spaces (i.e., your desk, a drawer) before moving to the larger areas. Clear counters. Create empty areas.
3. For each unit to address, sort into piles the items: create a "keep pile," a "trash pile," a "recycle pile," and a "donate pile." Release what does not have purpose or meaning to you. Follow through with distributing the trash, recycle and donate piles. Organize the keep pile as follows:
4. Get drawer organizers, containers, shelf risers and Lazy Susans to store papers and items. Sort "like" items together in containers to make things easier to find. Label containers and position in easy-to-see locations. A label maker is a quick and neat way to identify your items.
5. Sort physical mail into piles of importance. Address the most important first. Throw out junk mail, opened envelopes and anything unneeded. Use trays for your mail to be housed.
6. Organize and pay bills and create an excel sheet of payees. If possible, set up auto-payment which will reduce the amount of mail and papers as well as missed deadlines.
7. Prepare several meals in advance so they are easy to grab and go; and this way clean-up is infrequent. Purchase new Tupperware or Pyrex for proper organization; discard those with missing lids, etc. Check your refrigerator and pantry and discard expired food. Donate unexpired food items for which you

do not expect to use to your local food pantry.

8. Periodically review and toss old manuals, handouts, dated law books, duplicates, etc. Paper references you do not use anymore can be purged. Shred paperwork which is not needed and if in compliance with firm policy.



9. Going forward, be sure to only buy what has a purpose and a specific place in your space. Have a location in mind for each item and know where it will be stored so that you may find it easily.
10. Create a sanctuary space to retreat to. This space should be completely devoid of any work or technology. Add a plant and/or items (e.g., photos, an instrument) that bring you calm and joy.

Mental space: Clutter is not just the physical "things" that take up space, it's the stress, worry and distraction that consumes space in your mind. Some tips to declutter your mind are:

1. Answer emails in order of priority. Address those emails you've been ignoring. Delete those you no longer need and unsubscribe to any unwanted senders.
2. Write down your tasks so that you may release them from consuming your thoughts.
3. Prioritize your tasks onto "To Do" lists. Have various lists such as: "Home-To Do," "Work-To Do," "Shopping-To Do," etc. Keep them all together and review them each morning to decide what you will accomplish that day. Mentally shelve the other items for a different day knowing that because they are written down, they cannot be forgotten.
4. Create a bucket list of short-term goals and long-term goals. It can be very satisfying to cross off items from the list as you achieve them. Revisit and revise the list as goals are accomplished or change.

5. Limit your screen time including time on your smart phone. Put your phone down and away from reach for planned out “tech-stop” periods.
6. Schedule rest or breaks throughout the day. This can include quick stretching or breathing exercises. Schedule enough sleep per day and follow through with it. Do not look at the phone during sleep hours and when possible, set the phone to “do not disturb.”
7. Write your creative ideas down in one location that you can revisit when you have time to expand upon them or see them to fruition. You may want to keep a notebook next to your bed for creative thoughts that often reveal themselves during restful times.
8. Keep a journal and write in it reasons you are grateful each day. Read it frequently for perspective.
9. Participate in a physical activity (e.g., walking) each day and expose yourself to nature when possible.
10. Meditate each morning and/or night to clear your head; in so doing, develop the strength to push negative thoughts away while releasing the build-up of clutter in your mind.

WRITERS CORNER

Use the Active Voice; Avoid the Passive Voice

By Judge Nelson Johnson

Vigor in your prose is essential. If you want your reader to keep reading, you must speak with an assertive voice. You achieve that through active verbs. Verbs make things happen. They build muscle. They generate energy. If your sentences seem to sag or lack dynamism, blame the verbs or the lack thereof. If your sentences zing home your message with meaning, credit the verbs. “Nurture the verb as though the life of your sentence depended upon it.” Effective writers must develop the mindset to prefer the active voice. It is more plainspoken and its meaning is clearer. It infuses your writing with more authority and directness to your readers. “Just as English tends to move straight ahead from subject to verb to object, it also works best when it goes straight to the point.” Avoid the passive voice like a deadly virus.

You can recognize passive-voice expressions because the verb phrase usually includes a form of be, such as *am, is, was, were, are* or *been*. In a passive sentence, the person or thing doing the action (the actor) is usually preceded by the word “by.” Active sentences generally are in the form of “A did B.” Passive sentences, however, are in the form of “B was done to A.” Accordingly, active sentences are easier to read. The passive voice “robs sentences of energy, adds unnecessary words, seeds a slew of

wretched participles and prepositions, and leaves questions unanswered.... Vigorous, clear, and concise writing demands sentences with muscle, strong active verbs cast in the active voice.”



Following are some examples:

Original: What would have been a disaster, was averted by the quick thinking of defendant.

Edited: Defendant’s quick thinking prevented a disaster.

Original: The injuries sustained by plaintiff were not a result of anyone’s negligence.

Edited: Plaintiff’s injuries were free of negligence.

Judge Nelson Johnson (Ret.), the former state Superior Court judge who penned the book that inspired the HBO series Boardwalk Empire, has a new book published by the NJSBA to help attorneys write and argue better. His latest work, Style & Persuasion: A Handbook for Lawyers, lists the most common writing and arguing mistakes lawyers make and includes practical tips for improvement. This is an excerpt from the book, which can be purchased at njsba.com.

TECHNOLOGY

Tips for an Engaging Podcast to Market Your Business

By Melissa Acosta

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Over the last 20 years, many attorneys and law firms have used different tools to market and network their business and services. These services may have included everything from newspaper ads, postcards, fliers, websites, business networking events, and sponsorships. Within the last decade, things such as social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and podcasts have soared astronomically as a way to reach more potential clients and market your business.