

The Successful Dilettante

from Susan Henderson

February 5, 2008

Issue 39

ISSN 1935-48866

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Greetings/News

A warm welcome to all you lovely *Creative Multipreneurs*. If you are looking for articles, tools, resources and book referrals to assist you on your journey in redesigning a life that encompasses your many passions and interests, you are in the right place.

In the first two issues of 2008, we covered the importance of getting your life goals out of your head and written down on paper as a declaration of your intention to accomplish them before you "kick the bucket." Then I shared ways to capture those incoming goals and ideas on an ongoing basis and a little bit about sorting them out and deciding where to start. In today's article I will share some tips, resources and simple systems that will help you get into action and make your dream goals a reality.

Featured Article: Tickle Yourself, Elmo

According to Elizabeth Hagan, author of *Organize With Confidence*, a good definition for clutter as it pertains to paper is "postponed decisions." You have a piece of paper and you aren't sure what to do with it. So you put it "here for now." Ah, here is another piece of paper and it also goes "here for now." And so on. That is where stacks and stacks come from.

I recently listened to an interview with Elizabeth by Robert Middleton of Action Plan Marketing and picked up some great ideas and tips that helped me rediscover my desktop and other flat surfaces in my office. We creative types like to have things out where we can see them, you know?

Get out from under those piles of paper.

The first tool she tells her clients to get is a wire mesh three-tier desk shelf. The top shelf is "in." The middle is "out." The bottom is "to file." Every piece of paper that comes into your office goes in the top basket. Once you pick it up from that top basket, it may not go back into it.

So you have this item in your hand and you make one of three decisions. She calls this the FAT principle. The "F" stands for "file." The "A" stands for "act." And the "T" stands for "toss" (which includes shred or recycle).

But first you might need to clear your desktop so you have a place for your desk shelf unit. And while you're at it you might as well tackle those piles on the chairs, floor and other surfaces. Get three banker's boxes or bins of that size. Label them File, Act and Toss. Don't agonize and spend a lot of time with this. Ask yourself the following questions. Elizabeth Hagan calls this the "art of waste basketry."

1. Does this paper require action? If not, get rid of it.
2. Can you identify a specific use for this piece of paper? No? Get rid of it.
3. Is it difficult to obtain again? If it's hard, keep it. If it isn't, get rid of it.
4. Is it recent enough to be useful? Uh-uh? Get an updated copy if needed.
5. Are there tax or legal implications? Not sure? Keep it and ask CPA later.

...and the biggest, most important question:

6. If I get rid of this piece of paper and would need it again someday, what is the worst thing that would happen to me? If you can live with the answer, get rid of it.

Quiet on the set... Action!

Start with your action items first and break them down into three parts:

Act Now: If you can take care of an item in two minutes or less, just do it. Get it out of your life.

Act/Delegate: If you have an action item that someone else can do, pass it one. You don't always have to do everything yourself. You might consider hiring a virtual assistant.

Act Later: These are generally all those papers you have been piling up with the intention to take action on later. You are afraid to put them away because you might not find them again and they really do need some sort of action taken sooner or later.

Elizabeth has a great system she calls the Command Center. I love it. It works beautifully. If you have a file drawer in your desk that is within reach at all times, use it. If not, purchase one of those desktop file holders. I got mine at Staples. It is black wire mesh.

Oh, that tickles!

The first thing to go into your Command Center is a "Tickler File." You can get a one-piece unit that expands like an accordion and has 31 pockets for 31 days of the month. You may also want a few file folders for future months.

So it's this simple. Pick up the first piece of paper that is an "Act Later" item. Ask yourself, "When do I need to see this item again to complete it before it is due?" The answer tells you where it goes in your Command Center Tickler File. If you are starting this midway or towards the end of a month, then the pockets before the current date will hold those items coming up in the following month.

Include those items you have written in your small notebook or on 3 X 5 cards that you want to put into action. (We talked about these in the January 5th and 20th issues of this ezine. Remember? One idea per page?) If it is a big goal and needs to be broken down into action steps, go ahead and file under the date that you want to schedule in the time to do that part and then you will be able to schedule the action steps. Before you know it, that "someday" goal is well on the way to happening.

The important thing is to check your Tickler File every day. Make it a habit. If you always check your email first thing, then do it before you check your email to create this new habit.

But wait... there's more.

Behind the Tickler File, inside the desktop file box, put some hanging file folders. These hold your General Action files. These, of course, are driven by your needs, but you may want one file for each person in your life you deal with on a regular basis. You may have your current project folders here. You may have meeting folders. Or data entry folders for entering business cards you've collected into your contact database. Orders pending. Receipts to enter in bookkeeping program. You get the idea. These folders are for all the things we have in action and don't want to forget. Now we can find them without digging through piles.

I hope this is helpful to you in clearing your paper clutter and getting a simple system in place to handle it. You will be amazed at the time and energy you can free up.

There is much more in this interview that I didn't have room to include here. Check out the resource section below for the link to this audio product.

Warmly,

Susan

Recommended Resources

Get Organized, Get on Track and Get Unstuck

Robert Middleton interviews Elizabeth Hagan

Audio and transcript available for \$29

http://www.actionplan.com/tc/tc_getorganized.html

Zen To Done: The Ultimate Simple Productivity System by Leo Babauta

A client recently told me about this book and Leo's blog. You can search through all his blog posts and get this information, but he has created this very nifty 83-page ebook for the wee sum of \$9.50.

<http://www.zenhabits.net>

Jott Networks

Don't have a pen and paper handy while you're out and about, but you do have your cell phone. Create to-do lists and reminders; send emails and text messages; or blog your thoughts from anywhere. *All with your voice!* And it's free. <http://www.jott.com>

What Can Susan Henderson Coaching Do For You?

Put Me In Coach... I'm Ready to Play!

I currently have openings for a couple of one-on-one clients who are ready to play a bigger game. If results are important to you, I invite you to contact me. We can chat awhile to learn if I am the right coach for you and you are the right client for me.

Mastermind Book and Groups

The DIY Mastermind Group: Insider Secrets to Creating a Successful Mastermind Group of Your Own ebook is now available on my website. But that's not all. With the purchase of this book, I am offering you a free 30-minute private brainstorming session. [Click here](#) to find out more.

It's a great time to get involved with a mastermind group to help you make 2008 your best year ever. If you don't have the time to set up your own group, consider my Power of Five Facilitated Mastermind service.

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