

TURNING ADMIN NIGHTMARES INTO A DREAM

Absolutely every business owner agrees on one thing - Administration is a "nightmare", a "burden of time" and usually results in "just not doing it". A few experts weigh in on how to change that nightmare into a fully functioning dream. Read on..

Getting a Handle on Paperwork

Take 5

Always take first five minutes (or last five minutes) of the day to file.

Jeffrey Cohen, ImageWorks, LLC - www.ImageWorksLLC.com

Just STOP!

It's key to STOP doing - versus doing everything on your lists. Daily & Weekly Entrepreneurs and their teams should find stuff to not do at all. Get rid of or don't bother doing stuff that seemed like a great idea at the time but now isn't. Start focus on working on the critical few things versus the important many. I could give you lots of ideas and specifics around this if you'd like.

Cameron Herold, Founder, BackPocket COO - www.BackPocketCOO.com

Everything Happens in 3's

On my desk, I have 3 file folders: one for things to do this week; one for things that need to be filed; and one for things that I eventually need to look into. Inside my filing cabinet, I have 26 files - one for each letter of the alphabet - and everything is filed by the company name that issued the document.

I clear out the "needs to be filed" folder at the end of each day. It's only purpose is to allow me to work each client more effectively. Once I've gone through my emails at the end of the day, I also look at the "to do this week" folder to ensure I haven't missed anything, and to create a must do list for the following day.

Dawn Martinello, Monday Morning VA - www.mondaymorningva.com

Become Regular

DO file on a regular basis. Filing regularly prevents eventually having to face a mountain of filing.

DO make a habit of filing on a particular day or at a particular time. That will remove the decision making process from the mix and put filing on auto-pilot.

Alice Price CPO-CD®, Organize Long Island Inc - www.organizelongisland.com

Digitize It

When it comes to filing - build a computer based structure of folders that matches the paper filing system, then, you only have one logic to follow.

Susan Lannis, Time Liberation Agent, ORGANIZATION Plus! Inc. - www.LiberateTime.com

Go Paperless

We worked very hard to reduce the amount of paper in our office;
All faxes are coming into a computer – and are left there. They are not printed out!
Invoices and quotes are sent via email directly from QuickBooks – none are printed
Bills are filed based on vendor
We registered with every credit card we have – as opting out of any offers, etc – this has reduced our junk mail by about 90% (aside benefit is that we spend less time processing mail.)
Orit Pennington, TPGTEX Label Solutions, Inc. - www.tpgtex.com

Go Mobile

Make time and expense tracking brain-dead simple by using mobile/web based solutions like Xpenser
Parand Tony Darugar, Xpenser - <http://xpenser.com>

Outsource It

Small business owners that outsource their Human Resources have more time to focus solely on the day-to-day tasks of running a business, without having to spend time and energy on employee issues. Overall an HR outsourcing firm shoulders the tasks that business owners don't have time to deal with – including HR, providing competitive health coverage, claims management, payroll taxes, direct deposits, etc. It is a way to simplify a small business owner's life by taking away the administrative burdens.
Rob Wilson, Employco - www.employco.com

A VA is Always the Way

Hire a part time administrative assistant who comes to my home based business. It's helpful to have another computer (or a laptop.) – She works 3 to 10 hours a week. She does typing, filing, manages my customer contacts, addresses Christmas cards, takes meeting minutes and cleans and organizes my supply and filing cabinets.
Valerie McCaw, President - VSM Engineering, LLC

Don't Bungle - Tungle!

One area where a lot of small businesses are wasting time is scheduling. The endless back and forth of emailing & phone calls to find a time to meet is a huge time suck. Add in the fact that small businesses do a lot of business with people outside their organization and it gets even more complicated. Enter Tungle.com. It works in sync with existing e-calendars making it quick and easy to make meetings happen. Syncing your calendar with Tungle lets you share calendars across systems and companies, send meeting invitations that propose multiple times, publish your free/busy schedule and more.
Erin Lariviere, Marketing Analyst, Tungle - <http://www.tungle.com>

Email & Voicemail Nightmares

Broadcast Your Availability

First, choose when you will—and won't-- be available electronically. For example, if your business sees fewer customers on Tuesday afternoons, create that slot as your no-click zone, and use that time for focused thinking and action to strategize around your biggest business challenge.

Then, once you've decided, teach people by example. Set clear expectations with your team and others so they know not to expect email responses from you during that time. Clarify the exceptions for them (i.e., "I'll only check email if we're on deadline and we've agreed in advance on a time I'll be online.") And stick to it—no matter what. It's a rare business situation that has to be handled immediately—in fact, most situations benefit from taking a little time to think about the right response.

Darcy Eikenberg, President & Chief Creative Officer, Coach Darcy LLC - www.coachdarcy.com

Make Some Rounds

Handling Email and Voicemail: In my personal business, I work in rounds. That means that when I'm working on Customer A and I receive a personal email - it's ignored; if I receive a phone call from Customer C - it's ignored. At the beginning and end of each day, I check ALL voicemail and email that may have been missed to ensure that I catch any potential problems and handle any rush assignments that have come up.

Dawn Martinello, Monday Morning VA - www.mondaymorningva.com

Procedures and Policies

Policy Can Be Lame, but Systems Can Save Your Life.

There is nothing worse than a useless procedure doc or process. At the same time, we found creating and using some simple systems such as work folders, file management, resource tracking, etc, saved us a ton of time. The key for us were to find the areas that were repetitive, and create a system that worked well for us. We found that in some cases clipboards and pencils worked better for us than spreadsheets. Find what works for you.

Tyler Hammond - The Engine Is Red - <http://theengineisred.com>

Make it Manual

We do have an operations manual. It makes it much easier to train staff.

If an employee knows the rules, they are less likely to make up their own rules (which could result in lost sales).

Sharon McRill, The Betty Brigade - www.bettybrigade.com

Map it Out

Every biz needs to map out their systems – how they get clients, how they engage them, how they retain them, office/team mgt and financial mgt. I don't call mine policies and procedures, but the steps are laid out clearly and can be replicated over and over.

Ann Ronan, Ph.D., Authentic Life Institute - www.authenticlifeinstitute.com

Be on Alert

Set up alerts in Outlook if you need to, in order to keep yourself on schedule. All reoccurring tasks should be scheduled and broken up evenly throughout the week. For example, in regards to social networking, schedule yourself to add x number of new twitter followers every Monday, and every Friday delete the ones that haven't followed you back.

Hilary Brooks, AVirtualEdge - <http://www.AVirtualEdge.com>