

## HUMAN RESOURCES

# How to... detox your desk

By Audrey Macnaughton, director of HR at Training and Development Consultancy Macnaughton McGregor Ltd.

CHRISTMAS IS a distant memory and sometimes at this time of year New Year's resolutions can also be well in the past. Or maybe this year you've been pretty diligent and are well in to a successful health regime.

A health campaign can benefit from the kick start of a detox as this helps you to quickly get rid of all the various toxins left in your body after the festive period. If you've ever done it you'll know that completing some form of detox can really help you feel lighter, help you to think more clearly and enable you to get back in tune with what's important for the effective functioning of your body.

Applying the same principles to your working environment can have a similar effect.

So how do you know you're ready for a desk detox? Think about how much time you spend looking for things, picking up work and putting it down again, being distracted by some urgent or interesting item that's caught your eye and the major one of missing an important deadline because something has got caught up in the mess.

Any time wasted due to your work environment (and this includes all the clutter in your e-mail inbox!), should be enough of an incentive for you to do something about it. So where do you start?

A simple system is the four D's: Do, Delay, Delegate, Dump. Using this method you assess each bit of paper, each magazine, each task.

There are danger zones with each category so let's quickly look at each one.

If a piece of work falls in to the 'Do' category,

remember at this stage you are not actually going to do the work. So while detoxing your desk you need the first of two essential pieces of kit: a piece of paper for your to do list.

The down side of to do lists is that we are often completely unrealistic so be clear on your true priorities and all other work can be scheduled in the second category of 'Delay'.

Which leads me on to your second essential piece of kit: a diary system. Schedule in the work and then get rid of the piece of paper or file. It can be tempting to keep it all on your desk but remember as your eyes scan to the piles of work you can feel the energy and motivation draining from you.

With the third category of "Delegate" think about the people you work with and think about the opportunity of getting others involved in your work as this may be a good development opportunity. To delegate properly you need to do this in advance so again schedule in some time to speak with them early. Don't wait until everything is urgent as you'll fall in to the 'it's quicker if I do it myself' trap.

Now the best one: 'Dump'. Be completely ruthless. Are you realistically going to read all those backdated magazines (North East Times being the exception)? Get rid of them or find somewhere more suitable to file them, perhaps where others can access them.

Once you've made a bit of headway it's a good idea to do a mini detox on a regular basis. It's amazing how much you can organise in 10 minutes



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if you put your mind to it so you are probably able to fit it in on a daily basis, a great tip is to do it just before going home as this has the added benefit of helping you to feel in control, organised for the next day and therefore able to switch off.

Give it a try, it could be the best New Year's resolution you make.

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