

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Handling Paperwork

Paperwork can be the bane of any employee's existence. Just when you think it’s under control, there comes a fresh flood to deal with. Handling paperwork may be a necessary part of your job, but you have the option of choosing how and when to deal with it. The key to managing your time well lies in concentrating on results.

Management Strategies for Paperwork

- Try to handle every piece of paper that crosses your desk only once.
- Sort paperwork into categories such as junk mail, client correspondence and internal communications.
- Deal with the most critical and time-sensitive material first.
- There are only so many things you can do with the paperwork that crosses your desk. You can throw it away, refer it to someone else, read it and file it away or act on it. Make a decision on each item as you categorize.
- Try to avoid procrastinating, while being mindful of time. If an item can be handled in a minute or two, do it right away. If it will take longer, file it in an “action” folder to deal with later.

Paper Handling Habits

- Determine if some paperwork can be automatically filed without being read.
- Whenever possible, note a “retain until” date on anything filed.
- Assess whether routine written reports could be replaced more effectively by a short verbal report.
- Maintain a clean desk and work environment.
- Use labelled hanging file folders to organize your paperwork.
- Check your “action” folder daily.
- Set aside specific times each day for paperwork. Minimize interruptions by closing your door or letting your calls be taken by the answering service.
- Recycle or shred unwanted paperwork to avoid clutter.

Time Management Facts

A person with a messy or cluttered desk spends, on average, 1½ hours per day looking for things or being distracted by things. That’s approximately 7½ per workweek.

The average reading speed is approximately 200 words per minute. The average working person reads two hours per day. A speed reading course can improve your reading rate to 400 words per minute and save an hour per day.

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It takes approximately 30 days to establish a new habit. Taking five minutes per day, five days per week, to improve one's job habits will create 1,200 improvements to a job over a five-year period.

A desk cluttered by unfinished paperwork can make tasks more daunting and stressful. Try these organizational tips to ensure that you are dealing with the burden of paperwork effectively and efficiently.