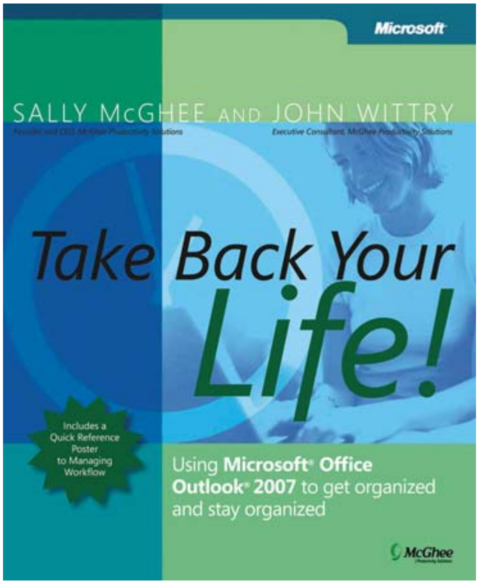
Microsoft
SALLY McGHEE AND JOHN WITTRY
Take Back Your Life!
Includes a Quick Reference Poster to Managing Workflow
Using Microsoft® Office Outlook® 2007 to get organized and stay organized
McGhee

Take Back Your Life!: Using Microsoft® Office Outlook® 2007 to Get Organized and Stay Organized

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9780735623439
Publication Date: June 2007

Microsoft Press

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Chapter One

Changing Your Approach Changes Your Results

Increasing productivity is actually not that difficult to do. In fact it can be quite simple once you learn what to do and how to do it. The key is creating an environment in which you can routinely focus on and complete activities that link to and drive your meaningful objectives. Sounds simple enough; however, for some of us it is not quite that easy. So, what makes it complicated? Well, many things: consistent interruptions, an overwhelming volume of information, cell phones, pagers, instant messaging, conflicting priorities, broken agreements, other people, fire drills–and the list goes on.

Notice that most of these items are external obstacles and distractions. External obstacles are relatively easy to handle after you know how, and we offer you various solutions in this book to address them. We think you'll be pleased with how quickly you can implement the solutions and how immediate the results will be.

The hardest part of the change process is not dealing with external issues but rather our internal limiting beliefs. These beliefs affect the way we think about our productivity, and they dictate our attitudes and approaches, and in some cases, they can persuade us we are going to fail before we even start! What makes them so hard to change is twofold. Number one, they are unconscious: we literally don't know we have these beliefs, and yet they drive our lives and impact how successful we are at creating and sustaining positive change. Number two is we believe they are the truth, that they are real, which is why we call them beliefs.

We've discovered over the years that if you don't become aware of and change these unconscious beliefs, the positive behavioral changes you make cannot be sustained. Positive changes slowly fall apart under the power of your limiting points of view.

Sally: When I first started my career I noticed a phrase I kept using under my breath. I would quietly grumble, "I should be able to do all the things I want." I clung to this belief because I wanted it to be true. I was working long hours, I was stressed out and tired, and in the end I didn't have time to get it all done. My work was beginning to suffer, and my family life and body were affected. Without realizing it, I was letting my own limiting belief hold me hostage and force me to sacrifice the things I cared about most. "I should be able to do all the things I want" was simply not true. It was driving me to work harder to get it all done, and I was failing, which was very disappointing. I began justifying why I wasn't getting it all done, believing that I should be able to.

As you know, there are only 24 hours in a day. No matter how well you manage them, you can't increase them to 25. Conversely, no matter how poorly you manage them, you can't reduce them to 23. However, I did not manage my life from a 24-hour calendar; I managed my life from a to-do list. Each day, I decided what I was going to do, and then started a marathon to get the list completed. Everything was taking longer than I thought. I was running myself ragged and breaking agreements. But "by George," I should be able to get that list finished.

I kept hearing myself say, "I just don't have the time to do it all." This was the reality, and yet I kept thinking I should be able to get it all done, which drove me to continue to try. It was the perfect pattern: my belief justified my approach and my approach justified my belief. To an observer, I was banging my head against a brick wall and wondering why I had a headache! I resisted using a calendar, I was stubborn, and I was righteous about my belief because, honestly, there just isn't enough time in the day—but that is no excuse for not getting it all done, right?

Finally, in reaction to some feedback from my team and family, I hired a productivity coach. Surprise, surprise, the coach wanted me to schedule my activities on a calendar to ensure I actually had the time to complete them. At first, it was humiliating and humbling because activities took much longer than I expected and I couldn't cram as much into the day as I was used to doing.

Over time, I began to learn how to plan a day during which I could actually complete everything and get home on time—that was a new concept for me. I came to respect the calendar. I realized there really are only 24 hours in a day, and I can only do what 24 hours will allow. After years of struggling against my limiting belief, my life began to turn around. I realized a simple truth: there will always be more to do than I can do and I will never, ever get it all done. Once I realized this, I became a lot more strategic about what I decided to do and made sure I plannedthese activities on my calendar to get them done.

With this new approach, I started to keep my agreements and moved back into my integrity. I was a lot more discerning about what I agreed to do, and I gradually began to take back my life. I created unstructured quality weekends with family and friends, I fulfilled a life-long dream to buy a horse, and I reduced my work week to four days, only to see my business grow by 40 percent. Now I embrace my new belief, "Working with my calendar allows me to do what I truly want to do," rather than the familiar statement "I should be able to get it all done." As a result, I'm productive and my life is a place of self-expression and joy. This is what I want to help you to achieve for yourself.

10 Beliefs That Limit Productivity

When clients start to make positive changes toward improving their productivity, they often bump up against their unconscious limiting beliefs and find making the changes hard. Therefore, it is a good idea to acknowledge the limiting beliefs ahead of time so that you can begin the process of turning them around (moving them from the 'unconscious' to the 'conscious'). Limiting beliefs, unconscious by nature, are usually buried beneath statements with which most of us are familiar. We want to help you clarify yours by offering 10 of the most common statements we hear from our clients and the limiting beliefs that often accompany them.

Familiar statement

- There's too much information coming at me too fast, and I can't keep up.

Possible limiting beliefs

- I should be able to handle all the information that's coming at me.
- I have to handle the volume to be a good person (a good employee, or a valuable team member).

Familiar statement

- I get too many interruptions.

Possible limiting beliefs

- Interruptions are a necessary part of my day-to-day experience.

- I must respond to all requests to be a responsible team player.
- My boss expects me to respond to requests within a few minutes of their communication.
- It's my job to help others.

Familiar statement

- I don't have the discipline to be organized.

Possible limiting beliefs

- I am an easygoing person–I'm not a disciplined person.
- I'm too lazy to be organized.
- Discipline is no fun.
- I don't want to be disciplined.
- Discipline is a bad thing.

Familiar statement

- I have to keep everything.

Possible limiting beliefs

- As soon as I get rid of it, you just know I'm gonna need it.
- Someone will ask me for it, and so I must keep it.
- It is my job to keep records of everything.
- I will get in trouble if I don't have it on hand.

Familiar statement

- It takes too much time to get productive.

Possible limiting beliefs

- My job is more important than the effort it takes to implement a new system.
- The upfront effort won't pay off in the long run.
- It is not worth the extra time.

Familiar statement

- I can't find what I need when I need it.

Possible limiting beliefs

- My system doesn't work, and so I rely on memory.
- I am not an organized person.
- My memory is getting worse.
- With the new search functions, I don't need to organize my files.

Familiar statement

- Organization cramps my freedom and creativity.

Possible limiting beliefs

- It is not possible to be creative and organized at the same time.
- Being organized is too rigid.
- Organization cramps creativity.
- Being organized is left brain and I am a right-brain person.

Familiar statement

- I'm no good with technology.

Possible limiting beliefs

- Technology is hard to learn, and I am not a technical person.
- Technology always breaks down and can't be trusted.
- Technology is complicated.

Familiar statement

- There's not enough time in the day!

Possible limiting beliefs

- I should be able to do everything I want to do in a day.
- I have to do whatever is requested of me.
- I can't get it all done.

Familiar statement

- I'm not organized by nature.

Possible limiting beliefs

- Organization is a gene that's passed down the family line, but I didn't get it!
- I'm an easygoing person.
- I'm lazy and undisciplined.
- It is too hard to get organized.
- I don't want to be organized because, then, I would have to be responsible.

If you've tried to make positive changes in your life before and those changes have not lasted, you can be sure there's an unconscious limiting belief that's keeping you stuck. Take a moment and evaluate if any of the limiting beliefs in the preceding list resonate with you. It's only when you can acknowledge these beliefs and bring them to your conscious awareness that you can set about changing them and improving and sustaining the results.

Did you know beliefs can transform spontaneously without any conscious effort on our part? For this to occur, new ideas that make us question our old beliefs must be introduced into our experience. When something influences the nature of our beliefs, casting doubt, it begins to break down old beliefs and creates a place for a new belief to be introduced and to blossom. By understanding this process, you can start to alter your own limiting beliefs.

The first step in this process is challenging the foundation of your belief, questioning its roots and casting doubt on its validity. Doubt creates an opening, a crack in which your unconscious mind starts to explore the possibility of a new belief. In other words, new beliefs are formed when you have gathered enough evidence to discredit or disqualify the old belief. No one questioned whether a man could run faster than a 4 minute mile before it happened. We all believed that was an unbreakable barrier. Then Roger Bannister broke it. Suddenly what was true before was now disproved, disqualified and discredited and a new belief about human potential began to be formed. As you can probably imagine, doubt can come from many different places: a trusted friend, a scientist, a doctor, a historian, or an authority figure. You might experience doubt simply from watching a movie or reading a book that challenges your point of view. After this sort of distrust is introduced, you begin to wonder what is and is not true. Over time, you will find yourself consciously and unconsciously collecting evidence from various places to annihilate your old beliefs and justify your new ones. Eventually, the new beliefs become solidified, and when this occurs they drop into your unconscious mind and you begin living your life as if these beliefs are the truth—at least for now.

> Sally: In my life, on occasion I sometimes still hear my old belief trying to cast its web of doubt: "You should be able to get it all done." However, I've learned to manage this false belief, and when it rears its ugly head I respond to it differently. I tell myself, "I will never ever get it all done, therefore I need to be more strategic and focus on the important things first." I've gotten smarter about saying 'no' and planning from my calendar and not from my to-do list. Changing this belief resulted in tremendous freedom and peace of mind for me.

We are going to take a look at each familiar statement and its limiting beliefs one by one. In each section, we list one limiting belief, we suggest a new belief, and then we provide several external solutions you can implement to improve your results. The new beliefs we offer are simply suggestions to help guide you; it is important that you create your own new beliefs and that they are unique and inspire you to make positive changes. Creating these new beliefs ensures that the external solutions you implement hold up over time. This is a critical step in maintaining and sustaining your productivity in the future.

1. There's Too Much Information Coming at Me Too Fast, and I Can't Keep Up

Limiting belief

- I should be able to handle all the information that's coming at me.

New belief

- There is a way to be in control of my e-mail, and I can regularly have an empty Inbox.

Solutions

- The volume of e-mail isn't really the issue; *how you process and organize the volume* is. Learning how to use the "Four Ds for Decision Making" can transform this belief. (See Chapter XX for more details on the Four Ds.)

The greatest revolution of our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.
—William James

Each year we receive more and more data from a growing array of devices that can be accessed from an increasing number of locations. It's both exciting and overwhelming at the same time. If you're not careful, the quantity of data starts to drive you instead of the other way around. Remember, the whole idea here is for you to be in charge and take back your life.

Jeff Price, vice president at a mortgage company, asked us how he could handle his overwhelming volume of e-mail. When we asked how many messages he wanted to organize, he grimaced and rolled his eyes, "1,500!" As we watched Jeff process and organize his e-mail, we noticed that he opened messages and commented to himself, "This doesn't make sense. I can't handle this right now. It's too complicated, and I'll look at it later." He then proceeded to close each e-mail message and let it reside in his Inbox! When you handle your e-mail this way, it doesn't take long to accumulate 1,500 messages in your Inbox.

For Jeff to process his e-mail more effectively, we taught him how to use the Four Ds for Decision Making. This model helped Jeff make strategic decisions for each and every e-mail, allowing him to empty his Inbox. All Jeff needed was a little education about how to process and organize his e-mail more effectively.

Over the last several years, we've heard an increasing number of statements from sources such as clients, newspapers, business magazines, and even television about the volume of e-mail and how the volume is decreasing productivity, increasing stress, and creating reactive unfocussed environments. The people who are making these comments present convincing arguments, and it sure sounds like e-mail is a huge problem. However, as you might be beginning to realize, the problem is not e-mail but *how we approach working with e-mail*. We've allowed it to become an issue and we've allowed ourselves to become the problem!

Our company has thousands of clients who consistently end their work days with empty Inboxes! We have statistics to prove that with the right kind of education, you can reduce the number of messages in your Inbox by 81 percent, and you can reduce the volume of messages you receive by 50 percent. The Four Ds for Decision Making is a powerful model that will help you successfully manage your e-mail.

2. I Get Interrupted Too Many Times

Limiting belief

- Interruptions are a necessary part of my day-to-day experience.

New belief

- I create boundaries that allow me to manage interruptions successfully and get my work done.

Solutions

- You can reduce the number of interruptions you receive and get your "real work" done during the day. The solution is to implement personal boundaries that allow you and your staff to create scheduled, uninterrupted work time.

We all are interrupted throughout the day, but are all interruptions completely necessary?

Small things done consistently in strategic places create major impact.

Consider the following situation: Ben Smith, a financial manager, is working on a Microsoft Office Excel worksheet in his office. Kathie Flood, a team member, walks in to ask a question about the company's health policy. Ben stops what he's doing and navigates to an intranet site to answer her question. When Kathie leaves, he must find his place in the Excel worksheet and start over. Joel, another team member, pops his head in the door and says, "Got a minute?" "Sure," Ben replies, and leaves his worksheet once again. By the time Joel leaves, Ben has lost 30 minutes and now must attend a meeting, postponing work on the worksheet until he has a free evening or weekend.

Because Ben consistently allowed these interruptions, he actually trained his staff that it was OK to disturb him. Some of these interruptions were necessary, but not all of them were. Unfortunately, interrupting Ben had become a habit for his team.

The solution is for Ben to meet with his staff so that he can create new expectations and ask for their help in supporting him. Subsequently, Ben called a meeting and let his team members know he wanted to have more uninterrupted work time during the day. He explained that he'd set up a recurring two-hour "work time" appointment on his calendar, and during that time he wanted team members to avoid interrupting him or booking other meetings. Ben was pleased at how respectful and supportive his staff was of this request. They understood his predicament and wanted to support him in making positive changes.

Our statistics show that by creating and reinforcing boundaries you can reduce your time dealing with interruptions by as much as 61 percent, allowing you to get more of your work done during the day.

3. I Don't Have the Discipline to Be Organized

Limiting belief

- I am an easygoing person—I'm not a disciplined person.

New belief

- Discipline is a decision, not a personality trait, and therefore I can be organized and use a system effectively.

Solutions

- Discipline is a skill that you already possess; you demonstrate it every day. The key to discipline is creating the appropriate motivation to make the specific changes you want. This enthusiasm then drives you to be disciplined.

Later in this book, we will help you set up an *Integrated Management System* that will improve your productivity and quality of life. This system requires discipline to maintain, and so being motivated to maintain it is an important and necessary step for your success.

There are two kinds of motivation: "away from" and "toward." The first is when you are motivated "away from" something you consider to be negative, and the other is when you are motivated "toward" something you consider to be positive. Both work equally well, although they're quite different. "Away from" motivation starts when you're sick and tired and tired and sick of an area in your life. Maybe you're fed up with processing e-mail in the evenings, frustrated listening to your to-do's rattling around your head, and weary of working long hours. This kind of negative energy can be a compelling driver of change.

"Toward" motivation requires some digging on your part. Ask yourself the question, "Why do I want to improve my productivity and work/life balance?

What is the benefit to me?" When you answer these questions, keep asking yourself, "Why?" until you find the underlying motivation. Remember to keep it positive. Don't list what you don't want, such as stress or overwhelm. List the positive side of those: you want more relaxation and ease, or more focus and control. It is very important to let your mind know what experience you want to have rather than the ones you don't want. When a child walks across the kitchen floor with a glass of milk in hand and you say, "Don't spill the milk," the child spills the milk. You see a picture of spilling the milk in your mind before you can utter the word *don't.* By then, it is too late. Instead, say to the child, "Walk slowly and carefully, and hold the glass with two hands," and watch what happens.

You'll know when you've found your "toward" motivation because you'll feel more inspired to make changes. When you discover that core desire, nothing will stop you from getting what you want.

When you start to use Microsoft Office Outlook in a more disciplined way, you'll find remarkable freedom. You'll create quality time at home, reduce your e-mail quantity, honor your agreements, and feel more relaxed and in control.

4. I Have to Keep Everything

Limiting belief

- As soon as I get rid of it, you just know I'm gonna need it.

New belief

- I don't need most of what I keep, and so I am letting go and trusting my new system in which the Delete key is my friend.

Solutions

- OK, prepare yourself. On average, the clients we work with throw away 50 percent of their stored information, and they feel lighter and happier, and have more time.

Our clients invest huge sums of energy filing and finding data. Of course, some of this filing is entirely appropriate, but we've discovered that a large proportion of it isn't. So, if you're a "keeper"—and you know who you are—hold on to your hats!

You keepers are a proud and experienced breed! There's nothing quite like laying your hands on a file that no one else can find. It justifies all of your filing and keeping efforts. Every department has a keeper who retrieves critical documents no one else can find. You probably know who the keeper is in your department!

Keepers learned to be keepers. At some point in their lives, they made a decision to hang on to information, and they've been hanging on to it ever since. If you're a keeper, you might recognize yourself in one of these statements:

- I got badly burned when I couldn't lay my hands on an important document. Now, I'm afraid to let go of information.
- I want to be able to back up the decisions I make, and so I keep everything.
- If my system crashes, I want backup data.
- I felt so good when no one else could find "that document" and I could. As a result, I decided to keep everything so that I could continue to feel useful.

At some point, you made a decision about keeping, and that decision has been driving you ever since. These beliefs are very powerful, but they may not support you in your current situation.

For example, we worked with a doctor who needed help managing the paperwork in his office. We asked him if there were any other areas we needed to clean up while we were there. He said, "Yes," and promptly showed us a room that looked like a storage closet full of boxes. He said, "That was my old office, and when it got filled up, I moved into another room!" We were a little surprised and realized this was a bigger project than we originally thought! He told us, "I'm a doctor, and I might need this information to save someone's life." It was a powerful justification. The only problem was that he had stopped being able to find anything a long time ago!

We ordered a dumpster and spent two days getting rid of 80 percent of his papers. After we finished working together, the doctor said to us, "You know, when I first started, I was scared I wouldn't be a good doctor, so I kept all of this information to help me feel more confident. Now I know I'm a good doctor, and I don't need all of it any more!" We will always remember this man because it took a great deal of courage for him to let go of all those papers he'd been holding on to for so many years.

We don't know your reasons for being a keeper, but it's worth taking a long, hard look to determine whether they are still good reasons that apply today and whether they still serve you.

The truth is, most people use only 15 percent of what they file, and this makes the other 85 percent ineffective. By clarifying what is useful and letting go of the rest, you can reduce your filing and save valuable time and energy that you can direct to more meaningful tasks.

5. It Takes Too Much Time to Get Productive

Limiting belief

- My job is more important than the effort it takes to implement a new system.

New belief

- I'm happily investing in my system, and my productivity is increasing.

Solutions

- You can save one to two hours a day using an Integrated Management System. This fact alone more than justifies the upfront investment required to set it up.

Following are a few examples of how people trip themselves up by not taking the time to set up an effective system.

- Writing a to-do list, and then rewriting it a week later on another list, and then on another.
- Opening an e-mail message, reading the message, closing the message, and then not doing anything with it right then and there only to open and read it again tomorrow.
- Going to the store to pick up something like dog food, only to arrive at the store and forget the brand name you wanted.
- Finding yourself at the office in need of the proposal you wrote for a meeting, and remembering you left it at home.
- Needing to read the *Leadership and Self-Deception* book at home, only to find that you left it at the office.
- Arriving at a meeting to find that you don't have the notes you need.

- Walking out of a meeting and remembering a critical point you wanted to raise during the meeting. Too late now!

These are just a few examples of how people waste time by not having an Integrated Management System to help them remember what, where, and when.

Here are some interesting statistics: on average, customers spend two to three hours a day working with e-mail and 60 minutes a day finding and filing information. After setting up an Integrated Management System, they spend one to two hours a day working with e-mail and 10 minutes a day finding and filing information. That's a savings of one hour and 50 minutes a day, which is almost 12 weeks a year! These time savings are nothing short of extraordinary.

Now, multiple those savings by the number of people on your team, and then expand that to the number of people in your organization. The results will really take your breath away! The bottom line is: You can't afford not to create an effective Integrated Management System.

6. I Can't Find What I Need When I Need It

Limiting belief

- My system doesn't work, and so I rely on memory.

New belief

- Reference systems are easy to set up and they save me time.

Solutions

- Setting up a Reference System is a skill that anyone can learn, and it's a skill that can save you 50 minutes a day.

Today there are so many places to store information that it's easy to fall into the trap of wanting to use all the tools you have at your disposal. You may be storing information in multiple and duplicate locations, such as in Personal Folders, the Inbox, the My Documents folder, Archive Folders, the Sent Items folder, or Offline folders, to mention just a few. Can you feel your head spinning thinking about where to find that critical document?

Robert Brown, an account manager at a telecommunications company, was having problems keeping track of the information he needed. He had papers all over his desk, 1,023 messages in his Inbox, and 106 documents in his My Documents folder. A surprising 80 percent of the e-mail in his Inbox was reference material. He didn't know where else to put it, and so he kept it in his Inbox. That might sound familiar to you.

Robert wanted to clean up his e-mail first, and so we coached him through creating an *E-mail Reference System* in his Personal Folders list. The first step was creating a folder hierarchy. Robert created 10 top-level folders that related specifically to his Meaningful Objectives, and he created additional subfolders that related to his Supporting Projects. He then dragged his e-mail messages from his Inbox into these new reference folders, and by the end of the process, he could barely contain his smile. He grinned and said, "I had no idea how easy it would be to file and find information based on my objectives."

Robert then created a *Document Reference System* in his My Documents folder, and also a *Paper Reference System* in his file cabinet using the same folder hierarchy that he used in his E-mail Reference System.

Robert duplicated the same folder hierarchy across all his storage locations: Personal Folders, My Documents, and paper. This made it easy for him to remember where to file and find his data. Robert didn't realize how simple it was to set up a Reference System that mapped directly to his objectives. All he needed was a little coaching to point him in the right direction. He did all the rest himself.

Most of you weren't taught how to set up an effective Reference System. When you have one, you'll be amazed at how simple it is to find and file information and how much time you'll save.

7. Organization Cramps My Freedom and Creativity

Limiting belief

- It is not possible to be creative and organized at the same time.

New belief

- It is possible to be organized and spontaneous; in fact organization promotes my experience of freedom and creativity.

Solutions

- Organization actually fosters and supports creativity and spontaneity.

You may find your creativity disrupted by the nonstop flood of reminders spinning around your head:

- Call Kevin for his birthday.
- Review the P&L worksheet.
- Call Northwind Traders about the meeting schedule.
- Review the Microsoft Office PowerPoint slide deck.
- Decide on a Valentine’s Day present.

Imagine if you could clear your mind of all these lists and transfer them to Outlook. This would create space for new ideas and creative thinking.

Being disorganized can also stifle your creativity. Imagine you’re an artist and decide to paint the autumn colors in Aspen, Colorado. You drive for three and a half hours from Denver to Aspen to find the perfect spot. When you arrive, you realize you’ve forgotten to pack your paint brushes. That can make being creative really hard! Preparation does support creativity.

Another example has to do with scheduling. It can be frustrating when your calendar is booked and there is no time left to be spontaneous. However, if you preplan, you can block out large chunks of time with no organized events. This provides downtime in which you can be impulsive and spur-of-the-moment. Having an IMS also allows you to know who to renegotiate with when something spontaneous arises and is a true priority.

After you’ve set up your Integrated Management System, you’ll find that it supports your creativity and spontaneity. The best result is being able to close your system, knowing that everything’s taken care of so that you can relax and let go!

8. I’m No Good with Technology!

Limiting belief

- Technology is hard to learn, and I am not a technical person.

New belief

- I can learn to use technology, and it supports me in being productive and effective.

Solutions

- Using technology is a skill anyone can learn with the right education. You'll be surprised at the personal satisfaction that comes from using technology more effectively.

For many of us, technology is frustrating because we expect it to be intuitive. When computers don't respond the way we want, we get irritated. We've heard clients yelling profanities at their computers and have seen people walloping their PCs in hopes of intimidating the computers into cooperating. Needless to say, neither technique works.

Some of us spend hours trying to figure out how to use Tasks, set up Internet connections, and deal with errors. We wonder if we're ultimately saving any time at all. Fortunately, just a little bit of technical education can go a long way!

Katie Jordan, vice president of a finance company, was a paper-based organizer who loved her papers. She used Outlook only for e-mail because she hadn't been able to figure out how to use it effectively to track her objectives, projects, meeting agendas, and tasks.

She tried using tasks, reminders, and flagging e-mail messages, but always gave up in frustration. However, when Katie's company decided to move all of its paper-based systems to digital systems, Katie knew it was time to get some help with Outlook because she could no longer avoid it.

After a full day of coaching, Katie managed to eliminate at least two-thirds of her papers, transferring the contents into Outlook. She learned how to set up Categories to track all of her objectives, projects, meeting agendas, and tasks. Katie also learned how to insert e-mail messages into tasks and calendar appointments, and how to drag e-mail directly into her To-Do list. She was consistently amazed at what Outlook could do and reluctantly admitted that her new Integrated Management System might even work better than her old, paper-based system. This was a huge step forward for Katie, given how frustrated she'd been with technology and how much she had loved her paper.

What Katie was missing in her previous attempt to switch to Outlook was the right type of education. Most technical training classes focus on individual features and benefits that help you use the basic software, but they don't help you use Outlook to increase productivity and improve your work/life balance. After you've set up your Integrated Management System and learned how to use it, you can increase your overall usage of Outlook features by as much as 50 percent.

9. There's Not Enough Time in the Day!

Limiting belief

- I should be able to do everything I want to do in a day.

New belief

- I can't do everything, but by working effectively with my calendar I can get the most important things done.

Solutions

- Lack of time is seldom the issue. The real issue is working in cooperation with your calendar and deciding what you can do given the amount of time you have.

As you know, managing your time with Olympian skill doesn't create more hours in the day. We all have the same 24 hours, and so the issue isn't managing time–it's managing what you can do in the time you have. We always say to our clients, "You can't do everything, but you can do anything, as long as it fits into your calendar." Therefore, you have to be very careful about the choices you make.

Phil Spencer, an executive in a software company, explained he didn't have enough time in the day to get his job done. We gently reminded him that he couldn't create any more time and that the issue was more along the lines of how he was managing his commitments.

Phil kept his to-do lists in multiple locations–in e-mail, on a calendar, on paper, in an Excel worksheet, on a running list in his head, and on a few sticky notes stuck here and there. Phil first needed to learn how to centralize and prioritize this list. Then, he needed to find out how to schedule items effectively on his Outlook Calendar so that he would know what he could and couldn't do.

Phil transferred his various commitments into the Outlook Task list.
He then compared the list with the available time on his Calendar and, right away, saw what the problem was. He was overcommitted and had more to do than time would allow. One more overachiever trying to expand his daily 24-hour quota!

Phil had to make some tough decisions because he couldn't complete all his agreements in the time he had. He was going to have to reprioritize, renegotiate, and, in some cases, cancel his commitments. Even though these were hard decisions, Phil had a much clearer idea now of what he could and couldn't do.

It was a humbling experience for Phil, but now he has a system that supports him in being realistic so that he can make well-informed decisions. This was a powerful change. It put Phil in a position of control instead of reaction, and it increased his sense of personal integrity, honesty, and self-esteem.

10. I'm Not Organized by Nature

Limiting belief

- Organization is a gene that's passed down the family line, but I didn't get it!

New belief

- I can learn to be organized and have fun with it.

Solutions

- Organization is an exceptionally simple skill that you *can learn* just like any other. In fact, it's a skill that's easier to pick up than are most of the skills you learned in your current career!

Consider for a moment: organization techniques were not taught in school. Most of us learned what we know today about organization through trial and error, picking up tips and tricks here and there, often coming up with stopgap solutions that haven't served us effectively in the long run.

Sally: When I was little, my dad used to tell me, "If you could forget to put your head on in the morning, you would!" I was incredibly scatterbrained and disorganized. I left for school each day with very good intentions, but always forgot to bring something I needed. I realized that I was relying on memory to keep track of things, and that clearly wasn't working. I quickly learned that if I was going to be more successful and feel more in control of my life, I needed to be more organized. I started using a paper organizer to write things down. It was the only way for me to remember things consistently! It made a significant difference, and so I continued learning about productivity, going to various time-management courses, and trying different systems.

I never found a system that quite fit all my needs, and so in 1989, I designed and manufactured my own system. Today, these organization skills are just part of who I am. Clients have referred to me as an "Olympic Gold Medal organizer." However, my closest friends know my history better! The fact that I wasn't organized drove me to develop my system and gain the ability to be organized.

Organization is a skill that you can learn. Give yourself the time to be a student and learn new techniques. These techniques can help improve your life and may be among the greatest gifts you can give yourself.

Making Changes Involves Letting Go

When clients embark on the journey of letting go of limiting beliefs and embracing new positive ones that open up doors, it can often involve a high degree of trust and courage. Making changes is not always easy to do; however, the rewards are big.

Change. It has the power to uplift, to heal, to stimulate, surprise, open new doors, bring fresh experience, and create excitement in life. Certainly it is worth the risk.
—Leo Buscaglia

Linda Mitchell, a program manager at a software company, had 3,983 e-mail messages in her Outlook Inbox. One of her goals while we coached her was to gain control of her e-mail so that she could get to zero and start with a clean slate. Linda was fed up with having to manage so much e-mail and fed up with her compulsion to keep everything–everything without which, she feared, she could not operate. Her belief was she could not be effective if she did not keep everything.

Linda created a new belief: "I am letting go and trusting my system." By the end of the session, Linda had successfully reduced her volume of e-mail by half. When we posed to her the question, "What are you willing to let go of to eliminate the remaining e-mail messages?" the thought of eliminating the remaining 1,991 messages was more than Linda could bear. She was not quite ready for that level of letting go. However, a week later, we received this e-mail message from her:

Dear Sally,

Yesterday, I deleted every single e-mail in my Inbox. I sent a message to all my staff and customers and informed them that my mail had been deleted and if there was anything I'd missed to get back to me ASAP!

Three months later she e-mailed us again.

Dear Sally,

I feel great. I have 25 e-mails in my Inbox and nothing happened as a result of deleting the backlog of 2,000 messages! I took the leap and it worked! I realize that I can do my job without keeping so much information. My system works; what a relief!

Letting go and changing behaviors require a leap of faith and a great deal of courage. Linda wanted to gain control of her e-mail, and to do so she had to change her approach and her beliefs. She took a risk and she let go—it was not a rational thing to do, and she did not think her way into it, she just let go. As you go through this book and implement your system in certain places you will need to have courage and simply let go.

In this chapter, you've probably learned that *often the problems we identify aren't the problems that truly need fixing!* The problems lie within us and in how we approach certain situations in our lives. As we change our own inner beliefs and implement different solutions, we produce different results. As Jim Rohn says, "I used to say, 'I sure hope things will change.' Then, I learned that the only way things are going to change for me is when I change."

One of our favorite expressions is "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you always got." If you're not as productive as you'd like to be, if your e-mail setup is not working for you, and if you don't have the life balance you want, you're going to have to do some things differently. Now is the perfect time to pick up your courage and make some positive changes.

I used to say, "I sure hope things will change." Then, I learned that the only way things are going to change for me is when I change.
—Jim Rohn