

“We don’t have time for time management.”

- **Harold Taylor, Harold Taylor Time Consultants Ltd.**

The annual National Association of Professional Organizers conference was in April, and I picked up a bunch of tips and product ideas to help simplify your lives and help you breathe easier! This e-newsletter and the June one will cover some of the information I learned.

Our opening keynote Scott McKain, author of *The Collapse of Distinction*, discussed how companies should create “distinct and compelling experiences” for the customers. This helps them stand out and create customer loyalty. Think about companies such as Starbucks, Target and Evian to name just a few. For an example of a compelling customer service experience, view Scott’s [Taxi Terry story on YouTube](#).

So you may wonder, what does this have to do with organizing, time management or productivity? As I listened to Scott, I thought of my organizing clients. Is your desk or home creating a distinct and compelling experience for you? Do you wake up in a peaceful environment or chaos? Is your desk filled with piles of papers and journals? Or is it a creative work environment? In these uncertain times, it’s even more important to have creativity and optimism. There’s a reason they call it the Power of Positive Thinking. Decide about what you can do to create your own distinct and compelling experience either at home or work. Then it will be easier to create those same experiences for others, such as your co-workers, family, and clients. Are you ready?

Time Management: Living at Warp Speed

Time management guru Harold Taylor says even though technology has sped up our lives, the basic tenets of time management have not changed. Any time savers we had with technology were offset by “increases in complexity, choices, interruptions, expectations, stress, delays and errors,” he said. “Our bodies are not designed to live at warp speed and we’ve created this hazardous lifestyle.”

Taylor said we also have “mental multi-tasking,” where we are doing one thing and thinking of another. Other hazards of speedy lifestyles include:

- **Work/Life Balance.** The blur between the division of work and life
- **Lost productivity.** As the saying goes, haste does make waste. The average office worker loses 2.1 hours a day from interruptions. Taylor points out that this is 25% of the typical work day.
- **Stress.** Surprise! It’s on the increase. Are you really surprised? Toss in ADD, infomania, clutter, and the never-ending to-do list, and you really have a stress party.
- **Lack of sleep.** Sleep deprivation causes more accidents than drunk driving, Taylor said. The average night’s sleep is 6.9 hours a night, and Americans usually get 90 minutes less sleep a night than we did a century ago.
- **Obesity.** One-third of Americans are clinically obese, and it’s caused by a lack of sleep and exercise and fast food.
- **Family Relationships.** Wireless items, such as the trusty Blackberry, intrude on family time and can affect relationships.

- **Lack of Creativity.** We have lost creativity because we don't have time for it. As Taylor says, you can't outsource creativity.

E-mail and PDA's have increased the speed of our lives, and e-mail is a constant stream of interruptions into our daily projects, Taylor said. In fact, 4 percent of people admit to reading e-mails while in the bathroom. I'm certain a much higher number of people admit to talking on their cell phones while in the bathroom – a major pet peeve of mine. As you can see, we feel we have to be connected to the world at all times, but people should be able to go to the bathroom without the use of wireless devices.

People have a difficult time letting go of work while at home, and the statistics show that. Fifty-one percent of people keep in contact with the office while on vacation, and 15 percent describe themselves as being e-mail addicted. "Work is no longer a place you go to," Taylor said. "It's a state of mind...The blackberry is the cost of someone's soul to be available at all hours for work." Since office layouts, cubicle farms, and electronic communications make people too accessible, quiet hours are quickly becoming a thing of the past.

Taylor offered some suggestions to help slow down our speedy lives:

- **Have meaningful goals.** If you have no goals, then you have no priorities. Use SMART Goals that are Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant and have a Time frame.
- **Planning.** It's important. The average American spends 40 minutes playing with their kids and four hours on shopping, according to Taylor. Schedule more time than you need for a task to account for the interruptions.
- **Prioritizing.** Using [the Stephen Covey quadrant](#) helps you decide what's important and urgent.
- **Life Balance.** Blend work and personal life in a way that satisfies you and your family, Taylor said.
- **Slow Internal Time.** "Time flies when you're not having fun either," he said. "Wherever you are, be there." He also suggests adding variety to your life by going to different places and trying new things.
- **Don't multi-task.** Studies show that productivity actually decreases by 20 to 40 percent each time you "task switch." Focusing on one task at a time is better.
- **Exercise Your Body and Mind.** Regular exercisers reduce their risk for Alzheimer's. "We are outliving our minds," Taylor said.
- **Snooze More.** Get plenty of sleep. Turn off the TV, slow things down earlier, trim the nightly to-do list, and get some sleep.

New Stuff

When organizers see new fun and exciting products, we're like a bunch of teen-age girls at a Jonas Brothers concert. Okay, maybe not exactly like that, but pretty darn close. Lots of new stuff is out so here we go. Links are marked in blue and also are listed at the bottom of the newsletter.

- **Recipes.** A Dallas dentist, who loves recipes and cookbooks, invented the [Recipe Relish](#). The Recipe Relish comes in several fashionable colors, and it's a cross between a binder and a recipe box. The box is large enough for recipes on 8 ½ x 11 sheets of paper, has a clip on the front for the recipe you're cooking, an easel to make it easier to read, and comes with divider tabs. Instead of my old method of slipping recipes into plastic sleeves and putting them into a binder, the Recipe Relish's recipes are loose in the box but are divided by the tabs. You can use the box for all of your recipes, or serious foodies can buy several for each category of recipes. Purge those recipes as you go!
- **Photo scanning.** Got a ton of photos, slides, and negatives to scan in? Now you delegate that job out to [SaveMyPix.com](#). You can pre-order their boxes to send in your photos and slides for scanning. They have detailed instructions and forms on the website of how photos should be sent in. All of the pictures are placed on a DVD which is mailed back to you with the photos, and you can order photos on memory sticks as well. Prices vary depending on the number of photos to be scanned.

- **Neat Desk.** The folks at Neat who brought you Neat Receipts now has [Neat Desk](#). Obviously this one is a little bigger than Neat Receipts, but it can scan up to 10 business cards, 10 receipts and 10 sheets of paper at one time. The software then creates a digital filing cabinet for you and transforms the information into PDF files. The data can be exported to Excel, Outlook, Quicken, QuickBooks, and TurboTax. Take heart Mac lovers. There is a Mac version for both products.
- **Pixily's Clouds.** To save your documents, scan them with [Pixily's ScanSnap](#), and the documents are automatically attached to an e-mail. You send the email to yourself using your Pixily user e-mail. Once the documents are received via e-mail, Pixily processes them and uploads them to your account. Using the new cloud technology, you can search, organize, share, and download your PDF documents from any computer. It's like magic. Okay, not really. It can be handy for those of us who live in hurricane-prone areas since your documents are safe in the computer world and not floating down the street. It's very handy for business travelers too.
- **Peter Walsh's In Place System.** The organizing guru has a new line of [office products](#) available through Office Max. Not surprisingly, the products have clean lines and are totally functional with today's offices. All of the folders, file boxes, and totes are made of plastic to last longer. The [Clip Taps](#) are binder clips with a tab attached, and the set comes with a dry erase pen to use. My favorite is the [desk sorter](#), which expands for larger files. Extra dividers not in use store very nicely in the back. Small and large [sticky notes](#) with the top corners cut off can be used as file tabs in any of the plastic folders. Your file names can be easily changed, moved, or removed.
- **Smead Folders.** The company had several new products debut at the conference. One is an accordion pocket folder with "Easy Grip Pockets," meaning the coating on the folder makes it easier to hold onto*. They also have a new [Tuff Hanging Folder](#) with Easy Slide Tab. The tab on this folder can slide back and forth on the folder. No more trying to wrestle the plastic ends into those paper openings. The new [Travel Organizer](#) has a pocket for your boarding pass and keeps all of your documents handy. For homeowners, Smead now has file folders just for mortgage paperwork: the [Mortgage Fastener Folders](#) and [Mortgage Index Divider Set](#).
- **Lists, Lists and More Lists.** Need a list? [ListPlanIt.com](#) is the place to go. Once you pay the membership fee (3 months is \$9.95 and 12 months is \$29.95), you can access any list on the website. Need a list to purge room by room? Managing finances or your home? Set up a vacation? Weekly to-do list? Party planning? Name it and they have it. By using these adaptable, pre-made lists, you can save some brain power for more important things, like following *Desperate Housewives* or *Lost*.
- **Pack It All Up.** Ever want to pack everything up and have it go away? That's the whole basis of [ClutterFreeBox.com](#). Order their special boxes, pack them up, take a picture of your contents, and ship them to the company. The company stores each box in their special storage unit. You can manage your personal inventory on the web and retrieve at any time. When you're ready, the boxes will be sent back to you.
- **Handbag Organizer.** It's such a simple idea. Check out [www.heavenlyhandbagholder.com](#). The holders can go over the door, hang on the wall with a metal bar and grommets or strapped to a closet rod. The 22 Velcro loops hold purses of all sizes. The holder is made from fabric and comes in four different colors. You can use it for scarves, ball caps, and other items.

New Book – Enough Already!

Peter Walsh wants to clear those mental cobwebs and thoughts that become obstacles in our lives. In his new book *Enough Already! Clearing Mental Clutter to Become the Best You*, he shows how by clearing the emotional and mental clutter, you can remove the obstacles holding you back from the life you want to live. The basic question he poses is "What is the life I want to live?"

With the economic situation, many of us are asking ourselves that same question. What kind of life do you want to live? What kind of life do you have to live now because of money and job uncertainty? What luxuries can and will you give up? In a previous TV appearance, Peter discussed the recession and said we got ourselves into this mess by buying cars, houses, and other items we really couldn't afford. We have the right to pursue happiness and think happiness is stuff. As a result, we have houses crammed full of stuff, which says Peter, "fills space. It costs money. It doesn't respond to your changing needs. It promises everything, delivers nothing, and eventually just stresses you out. Chasing the life you want by accumulating more stuff is a dead-end street."

In the book, Peter covers six areas of your life – Family, Relationships, Work, Health, Money, and Spirituality. If one of these areas of your life is cluttered, then the clutter will seep into other parts of your life. Like physical clutter, emotional clutter can become just as harmful. In the relationship section, he says to give up unhealthy relationships. "But holding on to an unhealthy relationship just because you've known the person forever is the same mistake that people make when they stuff their garages and basements with useless memorabilia from their pasts," he writes. "Live in the present. Get rid of the stuff that you no longer honor and respect." Even if that clutter is a person.

In other sections, he points out the way we internally clutter our lives – postponing doctor and dentist visits, eating the wrong foods, lying to spouses about money, not having boundaries, overscheduling yourself and your family, and not establishing priorities and goals. You name it, he covers it. The book has notes Peter has received from clients and quizzes and assessments to show where you are. It's a must read especially for our tumultuous and uncertain times. Clear your own mental clutter and fears to live the life you want.

Got Clutter? I have developed 30 minute and 45 minute presentations on organizing, time management, and productivity. Moving to a new building? I also have a 30-minute presentation on preparing for a move for your department. I also do one-on-one sessions in your office and help you come up with a solution to your organizing problems. To schedule a presentation or a one-on-one appointment, call 713-792-8061 or email jsimon@mdanderson.org. Follow me on Twitter! Look up JaniceSimon. For Facebook, look for Janice M. Simon. My personal blog is: www.theclutterprincess.com.

***Smead's Easy Grip Pockets: No photos are available on the web and the product may not yet be in stores. Item numbers are: 73212 (1-3/4" expansion); 73208 (3-1/2" expansion); and 73209 (5-1/4" expansion).**