Keeping Up With Organization In the New Year

Ah, New Year's resolutions. In January, you're full of motivation to get organized – but by March, you're surrounded by piles again and feeling more overwhelmed than ever. What do you have to do to stay on track and make those good intentions last throughout the year?

Take Small Steps

It's natural to get excited about a new goal and become a little “overzealous” in your organizing efforts. But if you try to go from zero to sixty all at once, you're just going to run out of gas. You'll be more successful in the long run if you start out making small changes, maintain those for a while, then move on to the next level. If you've never processed a piece of paper willingly in your life, don't set a goal of “filing each document as it crosses my desk” – you simply aren't going to do it. Instead, create a “to file” bin and spend 5 minutes at the end of every day collecting up loose reference items that need a permanent home – then, set aside time just once a month for emptying your basket. Once you've mastered that level of filing, bump it up to every two weeks, then every week. Soon, you'll be a paper pro, and the stack on your desk will have disappeared for good!

Develop A Daily Habit

One of the worst mistakes people make when trying to get organized is treating it like a big “project.” They set aside a weekend or two in January to file and toss and re-arrange, and are very proud of themselves once they've “finished.” Then they return to their old habits, and are shocked when (about a month later) the office is a wreck and the paper has taken over again! The difference between a “project” and a “goal” is maintenance – while you may be able to complete a project and walk away from it, you have to put time in every day to keep moving forward on a goal. Just as with exercise or healthy eating, organization has to become a part of your daily routine. The easiest way to make this happen is to set aside 15 minutes at the start of your day and 15 minutes at the end for organization. Review your schedule and your to-do lists, blocking off chunks of time for getting your most important tasks done. Put supplies and papers back where they belong, and tidy up your workspace. Gather together the materials you need for that meeting or report or business trip, and make sure you have all your ducks in a row. Just a small time investment each day quickly pays off in the form of a habit – and once you've developed those good habits, you'll stay

organized without even thinking about it!

When You Fall Off The Wagon

No matter how hard you try to maintain order, there are going to be times when life conspires against you. You might have a family emergency or business conference that takes you away from the office, leaving you to play catch-up when you return. You may need to ignore the daily grind for a while to work on next year's budget or write an important report. Or your company may go through a difficult transition, throwing everyone into a state of chaos. The important thing to remember is that these bumps in the road are temporary – they too shall pass. And once your work life calms back down, there's no reason that you can't rediscover the sense of order you had created before this crisis. Just set aside a day or two to regroup – go systematically through the piles, create a list of to-do's in order of urgency, and tackle each task one step at a time. I promise that, with a little persistence, you'll regain your sense of equilibrium and be right back on top of things in no time!

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Watch or Listen to Ramona discuss must-have tips for organizing and life on the road in a 200 square foot RV on the "*Keeping You Organized*" Podcast.