5 Beliefs That Hinder Your Organizational Skills- Joshua Riddle

For years I struggled with my work and office organizational skills. I stumbled over core beliefs that constantly stood between my organizational goals and reality. I was overloaded by a cluttered desk, an overflowing inbox, and the relentless ringing of my telephone. How was I supposed to become an organized individual?

I have good news for you if you can relate yourself to that last paragraph. That’s right I said good news. You can become an organized and productive participant in your work life, and in your home life for that matter. Eventually I realized that I was failing to become organized due to the belief that I could not be and organized person. Let me share with you the five core beliefs that limited my organizing skills and the five truths that freed me.

1. I have to keep everything.

If you are anything like I use to be, you have a difficult time throwing anything in the garbage. Your inbox probably has hundreds of email stored in it just in case you need some information from them in the future, you have a closet full of boxes full of papers, and you have filing cabinets where you probably waste more time looking for specific items than finding them. You never know when you might need it, right? The core belief that you must keep everything “just in case” is responsible for all that clutters and is a major cause of disorganization in your life.

Here are some facts for all of you collectors:

- On average, an organized individual or company throws away around 50% of their stored information without consequence.
- Most people use only 15% of what they file.
- By clarifying what is usable and letting go of the rest you can reduce your filing and save precious time and energy for more important tasks.
- It takes great courage to let go of past information.

Reality: You do not have to keep everything. And by getting rid of what you don’t need you will feel less burdened and free, you will have more time to do what matters, and you will be able to find the information you do need when you need it.

2. There is just too much information and interruptions to be organized.

In this age of technology you are overloaded with a constant barrage of information and interruptive communications. The little notification in the bottom corner of your computer’s desktop is constantly informing you of new email messages, your telephone is now small enough to be carried everywhere in your pocket, and instant messaging, well its instant. People can get a hold of you whenever and wherever they want to, regardless of what you want. The belief that it is impossible to stop these interruptions and organize your communication practices is another blockade on the pathway to a structured work life.

If you’re not careful this increasing amount of data and communications will end up becoming what pushes you through your daily habits. When in reality you should maintain control of your communication practices.

For example, what do you do when you notice you have a new unread email message in your inbox? Do you immediately stop what you are doing and open the message, read it, then close it right back into your inbox? If so, you just interrupted whatever you were doing, wasted a couple of precious minutes and did nothing for the hundreds of messages already sitting in your inbox.

In order to become more organized in this area you need to learn a method for processing your inbox. For some tips on how to process emails check out the article Inbox 101. Remember that you do not need to deal with every email message as soon as it lands in your inbox. Turn off that little icon and the ding. Trust me, you don’t need them.

Also, interruptions only occur when we permit them. When you constantly allow people to interrupt you, whether it is in person or by telephone, you are actually training them that it is o.k. to interrupt. Try setting boundaries with your staff and co-workers. Let them know that if they need something they will need to bring it to you at a certain time. Politely inform them that they will be sent away and asked to come back later if they choose to interrupt. Remember to stand firm in these boundaries. Over time people will know that you mean business and they will figure out that you’re more helpful to them when you’re organized and able to give them your undivided attention.

Reality: You can manage the information and the interruptions, because the problem doesn’t lie in the amount of information and interruptions. The problem lies with your methods of processing that information and handling the interruptions.
3. Getting and staying organized takes too much time.

Some people believe that personal organization it takes too much time. You might believe that it is not possible to add anything new to your already overfilled work flow.

Here are a few things you might be doing that would be greatly improved by getting organized:

- Reading an email message today, and then reading it again tomorrow because it is still in your inbox.
- Showing up to a meeting or appointment without the required materials for the meeting.
- Adding tasks to your task list and then adding those same tasks to next week’s task list because you forgot to do them.
- Spending too much time filing and searching for information.

People spend many wasted hours every day working in e-mail, looking for information, and trying to catch up with forgotten tasks. By taking the time to get organized you will be saving yourself hours a day and full weeks every year.

Reality: You do have the time to get organized, due to the fact that by getting organized you will be saving yourself from the countless wasted hours and days of disorganization.

4. I am too undisciplined to be organized.

Many disciplined people fail to see that they practice discipline every day. When you get up in the morning, eat breakfast, brush your teeth, get the kids off to school, and leave for work, you are being disciplined. Discipline is something that we practice unknowingly. What you probably lack is motivation.

The good news is if you are reading this article, you’re probably already motivated for some form of change. Your motivation might come from the draining feelings that accompany the habit of catching up on email during your evening free time or from the desire to rid yourself of those never ending task lists. Or you might be able to dig deeper and find that becoming a more organized individual will benefit you in a more internal way as a person. The key is to be motivated. With motivation comes the discipline necessary for change.

Reality: You are a disciplined person. The key to applying that discipline to being organized is the cultivation of motivation. Enthusiasm will provoke you to be disciplined.

5. I am not organized by nature.

If you are not an organized person then you might as well forget about the other 4 beliefs that are keeping you from being an organized person.

I’m only kidding.

This is the most important core belief that you must rid yourself of in order to move forward into organized productivity. The belief that you weren’t born with the ability to become organized in your affairs is the number one offender on this list. Organization is not something hard coded into your D.N.A. It is a skill that can be taught and learned. It is actually an essentially simple skill to master once you are willing to let go of any pre-conceived notions regarding yourself and your ability to be organized.

Reality: You can be an organized and a more productive individual. All it takes to become the organized person you long to be is a willingness to learn a few techniques and to practice those techniques until they are an ingrained aspect of your work style.

In conclusion, organization is not something that only certain people are capable of. Anybody, even you can learn to be an organized and productive person. If you find yourself believing otherwise, try saying to yourself, “I am an organized person,” and believe it – even if the evidence hasn’t shown itself quite yet.

If you believe in the realities of organization and dispel the hindering myths blocking your paths, you will soon begin to see the order in your affairs.