

The Colossal Cost of Clutter

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BizLife Magazine, March 2003
www.bizlife.com



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What would it be worth to you to have an extra week or more of time each year? With Spring cleaning upon us, let's take a look at the time you can find by giving your life a regular clean sweep.

First let's distinguish between price and cost. Price is what you pay to get something; cost is what you pay to keep it. Everything we own costs us something to keep. For example, you pay a price to buy a car, then you pay the costs in time and money to wash it, fix it and insure it. It's the same thing with all the dustables on display at your home and office—it costs you time and energy to maintain them.

Look at the clutter in your desk drawer, the old files in your computer system or file cabinet and the processes you have in place that make your life work or not work; it costs you something to keep them. With an average 20 work days a month, saving 10 minutes a day by getting rid of physical and mental clutter gives you an extra 40 hours a year—a whole work week—to do what brings you more success and joy in life.

So where can you leverage at least 10 minutes a day? Answer: eliminate your tolerations.

What's the difference between tolerances and tolerations? A tolerance is a range of what is acceptable to you. A toleration is something you put up with beyond your tolerance range. Anything that goes beyond your tolerance is a toleration that wastes your time, energy, money and other reserves you'd like to have.

How about some examples?

- Your kid leaves the cap off the toothpaste every day. It takes you a minute to clean the sink and five minutes to fuss—a daily cost of 6 minutes.
- You forget where you put your keys and you average 5 minutes a day—including aggravation time—finding them.
- You spend 30 minutes finding the file or document you just had in hand a minute ago.
- Bill and Betty are great people, but they cost you 20 minutes a day being chatty plus another 10 minutes of being frustrated about it.
- It costs you three minutes a day to find the things you need in your cluttered desk drawer.

(Note that tolerations include the time you waste thinking and feeling PLUS the time you spend performing the toleration!)

How can you put an end to these tolerations and reclaim the wasted time and energy? Consider these simple solutions:

- What if you used a toothpaste pump to eliminate the bathroom mess?
- What if you made a practice of keeping your keys in a certain place?
- How about handling that file or document before you get distracted?
- Can you set some friendly boundaries with Bill and Betty?
- Buckle down and clean out your desk; you'll be amazed how quick and easy it is to find your stuff!

Can you see how a few small changes might save 10 minutes a day? What would you do with the extra work week this would give you?

If asked to compose a list of tolerations in their lives, there are people who could list only a few; Others would have so many that they may realize their whole life is made up of tolerations. When people say, "There aren't enough hours in the day," I want to ask, "What are you tolerating?"

Take the First Step

What are you tolerating? What are the tolerations that steal your resources? Identifying these tolerations is the first step in clearing them out of your life and reclaiming your resources.

Try this: sit in a comfortable chair and mentally go around each room where you live and work. Make a checklist of things that waste your time, money and energy. At this point you'll have three options for each toleration on your checklist: fix it, modify it into something you want to be, do or have, or make the conscious choice to keep it like it is. (Yes, you can change a toleration into a conscious choice and then enjoy it.)

Eliminating tolerations does more than just save time. It releases the energy and resources that surround each toleration to use in positive ways for your life. If saving 10 minutes each work day can give you an extra week a year, then what if you could save 20 or 30 minutes a day? What could you do with the extra weeks of time each year?

Here's a special offer towards making life a "Toleration-Free Zone." A 4-page program called Clean Sweep lists 100 possible tolerations to eliminate in your life. Email me at thecoach@mackarrington.com, and I'll email you a free Clean Sweep Program, which will help identify and eliminate your tolerations.

Set some time to make some time. Mark your calendar to compose your tolerations list, identify the ones to eliminate and go for the goal.