

## MANAGING CHAOS

Chaos is good. Companies need clutter, chaos, and on-the-fly decision making. It's what makes a company thrive; but all of it needs to be done right.

For those of you with messy desks, and a "to do" list you can't find, there's hope!

Pasteur discovered mold on a Petri dish after an extended holiday, in his disorganized lab. The result – Penicillin!

60% of all employees believe themselves disorganized. 88% believe their companies are not well organized, or are organized the wrong way. Only 7% think there is a possibility that their company is "over-organized".<sup>1</sup>

With a science, we can develop properly to "get it done" thinking. We can be both organized in a productive way, but also driven to work well in a chaotic environment.

Chaos breeds change. It's from "good chaos" that companies invent great products. People have new ideas, and those exciting changes are made through "work" for the betterment of our lives.

There are steps to organization. A clean desk can sometimes mean that someone spends too much time organizing and cleaning the desk. A messy desk can be very organized, if the person handling the chaos has order to their thinking.

Multi-tasking is part of business, but we take on additional multi-task levels or "toys" (phones, Blackberry, PDA) and often over-input ourselves. The human mind can handle only 4 or 5 "tasks" or "inputs" at a time. The rest is pure overload. It's where mistakes are made, and the mistakes can then take up part of ongoing good time of work, fixing what we messed up.

In Freedman's book, he teaches what we at The Evans Group LLC have always taught. Our "The Main Thing is to Keep The Main Thing The Main Thing©" motto means "keep it simple, do what you do best and don't complicate simple transactions" Shoot lots of bullets.

Freedman articulates that, in business, we should always be taking risk, always questioning, but when we are wrong, or we've learned, stop the error. Move on. Try again.

When we consult, we try to teach not focusing on the "traditional" right way to do something with employees. If something they are doing "non traditional" is working, examine why. Do an autopsy on the process that works and implement it. And, more importantly, do an autopsy on the ones that don't work. Find out what happened and change it so it doesn't happen again.

"Embrace change," consultants say, and sadly, they are right. Change is inevitable, and can be used to evolve a business.

Minimize your priorities, and start each day with a "not to do list". This really helps.

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<sup>1</sup> A Perfect Mess, by David H. Freedman-Little, Brown, and Company-survey

Keep a record sometime, for a few weeks, of what you do, logging everything you do, just like a lawyer writes up his billable minutes. Tell yourself the truth. (What interrupts you the most, takes most of your time, not allowing you to be productive? What can/should others be doing?) From that list, make your daily not to do list. You'll have much more time.

Manage your own chaos. Don't fight your personality type. If you're messy, clean up the mess just enough to be of value to you. Organize around what you already do best. Do the same thing as you manage people, or your own business. Done right, it's all the same. A good employee wants to perform a service, and to gain skills, or use what he/she is trained in, to advance themselves. Identify those employees first. Not talkers, but the "bright lights" that are just waiting to be developed, or newly hired.

Simply do not surround yourself with people that are not inviting and challenging, and willing to do more. Don't run away from these relationships in business, just know they will not advantage you, and could bring you to the rank of the initiated and boring.

If you want to succeed, you first must define "at what?" To do this, you must know who you are, and where you want to go.

It is this simple, and almost always people fail because they move away from goals they have, or do not have goals established that would allow them to be more.