



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### Taming of the Infobeast

Managers waste the equivalent of six weeks a year on searching for documents, be it in a hard copy file or in their computers. It is not their fault - they are flooded with information, which eventually piles up. Retrieving relevant documents when they are needed can be a Herculean task. Organizations today need information to survive competition, but being flooded with information can be as bad as being uninformed. It is essential to tame this 'infobeast.' Designing an office file system, either manual or computer-based, can save time and frustration.

#### Divide and rule

Each area needs a separate filing system. As attractive as electronic communication seems, it is best also to have a paper filing system, thereby avoiding the hassle of having non-compatible systems or documents that cannot be shared or opened. It is much easier to use the paper filing system. Moreover, paper is better for passing information.

#### Employ efficiency principles

1. Place information under the category of FYI (for your information). Just because you receive or obtain information does not mean it is meaningful. Give yourself permission to throw some of it away. Being proactive about information is the key to managing information effectively.
2. Use the "FAT" system: File, Act, or Toss! When information piles up, it means decisions have not been made. File the information for later use, act on it since it may be imperative to an ongoing project or event, or toss it as if it were not related to the goals. This should also be applied to electronic information. There are many people who have an inescapable temptation to save all the messages they receive.
3. Rely on a file index. A file index is the complete list of files in a filing cabinet, allowing even non-users to easily find what they are looking for. Taming the paper tiger is a software application that allows automation of files and finds documents in five seconds or less. It also provides numerical cross-references, pre-printed labels and an automated index whereby you can locate any file immediately with the help of a keyword search.

#### Make judicious use of technology

Most people acquire things or technology without ever questioning their utility. It is crucial to consider the utility first, and then look for the appropriate tool (not the other way around).

#### Summary

Effective time management is an art very few people practice. Most managers spend a considerable amount of time searching for documents in a sea of information. The above tips help prevent such crises both in one's career and personal life.