

Shape Up Your Office

with the Office Depot Five-Day Office Makeover Plan



An overflowing inbox and piles of papers on a desk can lead to hours of lost productivity every month, costing businesses money and individuals precious time. Office Depot has a few basic exercises that can get any office into shape. Of course, getting into shape is not just about toning up your body. It also relates to improving the condition of your business and office space by organizing it so work can be conducted effectively. To get you started, Office Depot has put together a Five-Day Makeover plan with the help of organizing expert Stephanie Winston, *The New York Times* best selling author of Getting Organized. These five tips will get your office in excellent shape in less than 30 minutes a day.

WINNING SOLUTIONS THAT HELP SLIM DOWN THE PILES:

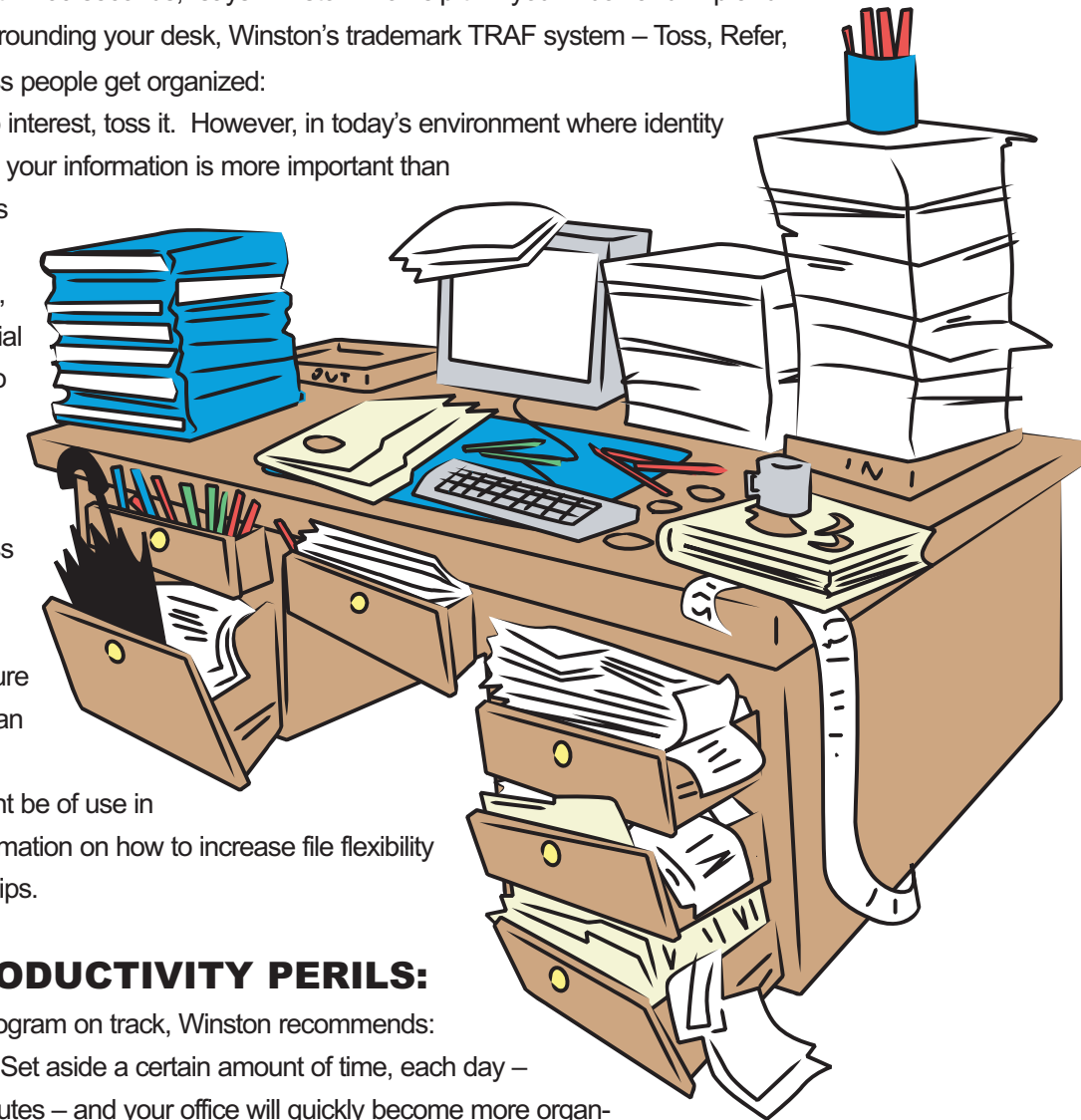
- **SHREDDER:** For confidential discarding, use a diamond-cut shredder to cut documents and credit cards into tiny, unusable pieces. The diamond-cut shreds are smaller than comparable types of shredders, reducing the need for frequent emptying.
- **ORGANIZATION CENTER:** Keep active files close-at-hand and organized with this combination five-slot sorter and two-tray system. Use the sorter on the top to keep folder files upright and the two bottom trays to hold loose sheets or inbox items in easy reach.
- **FILE CABINET AND FILE FOLDERS:** Keep less urgent file folders in a nearby file cabinet. Make sure to take advantage of a locking filing cabinet for added security. Fire-proof file cabinet options are also available.
- **FILE STORAGE BOXES:** A must-have for any organizer looking for a quick and easy archival storage system. These sturdy boxes fit legal- and letter-size records and have convenient tote handles making files easy to carry.

Day 1: Slim Down the Piles

A slimmed down waist line is wonderful but what can you do to help control those huge stacks of papers that are consuming your workspace?

“An organized person can retrieve any piece of paper on any topic from their desk within 60 seconds,” says Winston. To help trim your inbox and “nip and tuck” the ever-growing files surrounding your desk, Winston’s trademark TRAF system – Toss, Refer, Act and File – will help business people get organized:

- **TOSS:** If the paper is of no interest, toss it. However, in today’s environment where identity theft is prevalent, protecting your information is more important than ever. Winston recommends using a shredder to ensure that confidential documents, personal papers and financial information does not fall into the wrong hands.
- **REFER:** If the information in the document is more relevant to a colleague, pass it along to them and minimize your relevant piles.
- **ACT:** Act on it and make sure to finalize the activity so it can be checked off the list.
- **FILE:** If the document might be of use in the future, file it. More information on how to increase file flexibility is available in Day Three’s tips.



PREVENTING PRODUCTIVITY PERILS:

To keep your organizational program on track, Winston recommends:

- **Adhere to Time Limits:** Set aside a certain amount of time, each day – approximately 15 or 30 minutes – and your office will quickly become more organized, requiring less time per day to maintain the orderly workspace you’ve created.
- **Dedicate a Specific Time of Day to Organizing:** Allocate the same time each day to organizing. This will ensure that TRAFing your office becomes a routine ritual that promises to boost your productivity.
- **Power through Pile Build-Up:** If your piles have been lingering for months, dedicate 10-15 minutes a day for five consecutive days just to sort through the backlog. This will help eliminate the piles quickly. However, be sure to spend only a small amount of time each day on the piles to prevent the task from feeling overwhelming.

Day 2: Tone-Up Organizational Skills

WINNING SOLUTIONS THAT HELP TONE-UP ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS:

- **ORGANIZER:** Keep appointments, to-do lists and notes in a single location.
- **PDA:** Carry documents and browse the Web or check e-mail on a Wi-Fi network with this compact PDA.
- **VIEW BINDER:** Binders keep loose papers organized and offer flexibility to make changes on the fly. Look for a binder that has a clear front that can be labeled with the binder's contents and changed as needed.

How do you keep it all organized? With a dozen messages to return, reports due and calls to make, how can you be sure that everything that needs to get done is accomplished in a day? Winston, who has interviewed hundreds of successful CEOs on how they finish their to-do items every day, says, "a centralized, master list of to-do items and pull daily tasks from that list. You will see that you can accomplish more in a day."

Follow these tips to help get yourself organized:

- **A MASTER TO-DO LIST:** Put all to-do items on a master list and include actions that you want to accomplish that day. To prevent the feeling of being overwhelmed by your daily to-do list, Winston recommends breaking out the list into "current" and "do later items." For example while every single idea, call, project or task goes onto the master list, only certain items will be incorporated into each daily to-do list.

This approach helps you manage your time more efficiently and focus your efforts on priorities.

- **DIVIDE AND CONQUER:** Take larger projects and divide them into manageable components with portions to be completed in the days leading up to the final project deadline. To manage sizeable projects, create a timeline and consider using a daily planner for the timeline and plot out when different portions of the project will be completed to ensure you stay on track.

- **DELEGATE:** Seek out items that you can delegate and assign them to colleagues or vendors immediately. Be sure to

follow-up on the status of the projects and impose deadlines so they are completed in a timely manner.

PREVENTING PRODUCTIVITY PERILS:

To keep to-do lists in shape with tasks that are achievable in a day, Winston recommends:

- **Use a Single Reference Tool for the Master and Daily List:** Keep track of tasks by using a single tool that best matches your work style. This can be a PDA, an organizer or a notebook. Carry this organizer with you at all times so new action items can be added with maximum ease.
- **Limit Daily Lists to 10-12 Achievable Items:** According to Winston, CEOs limit the number of items on their daily to-do lists. This way, they can ensure that they will not only finish what is on their lists, but also prepare for interruptions, intangibles or other tasks that need to be handled in a timely manner.
- **Schedule High-Priority Tasks During High-Energy Time of Day:** For tasks that absolutely must get done today, schedule time into your calendar early in the morning. That way you will be at your maximum energy level and will be able to enjoy peace of mind that the task has been accomplished before something unexpected commandeers your attention and your time.



WINNING SOLUTIONS THAT HELP INCREASE FILE- FINDING “FLEXIBILITY”

- **COLOR FILE FOLDERS:** Add a splash of color to everyday files with folders available in assorted boxes or individual color files. Organizing by color is one foolproof way to find what you are looking for in a pinch.
- **HANGING FOLDERS:** Use hanging folders to organize folders within a section.
- **SELF-STICK FILE LABELS:** Self-stick labels make it easier to re-label and reuse folders; some labels offer color options to help files stand out.
- **FILE CABINETS:** Put files into file cabinets to keep them better organized and safely secured.
- **DESKTOP ORGANIZERS:** These are useful for keeping active files close-at-hand for regular access.
- **CARTONS OR PORTABLE STORAGE BOXES:** If you are moving files into storage, purchase cartons or portable cardboard or plastic file boxes. Be sure to label each box with its contents to make it easier to access at a later time. Look for a wing-lid box so it can be opened and closed easily when you retrieve important documents from storage.

Day 3: Increase File-Finding “Flexibility”

When a potential new client or your boss calls, can you find the background information filed away for this particular discussion? “Many people create files that have names which make sense at the time, but do not come to mind easily when you need to retrieve the folder,” says Winston. “Instead, create file names that outline the overarching topic of information that will be in the folder. This will help you keep your files maintained on an ongoing basis in order to keep organized.”

• **USE GENERAL LABELS VERSUS VERY SPECIFIC TITLES:** You will find it infinitely easier to find what you are looking for if you create a master hanging folder with the broadest name that contains manila folders with more detailed names. For example, if Acquisition Targets is the general title, then each manila folder is labeled with the individual company names.

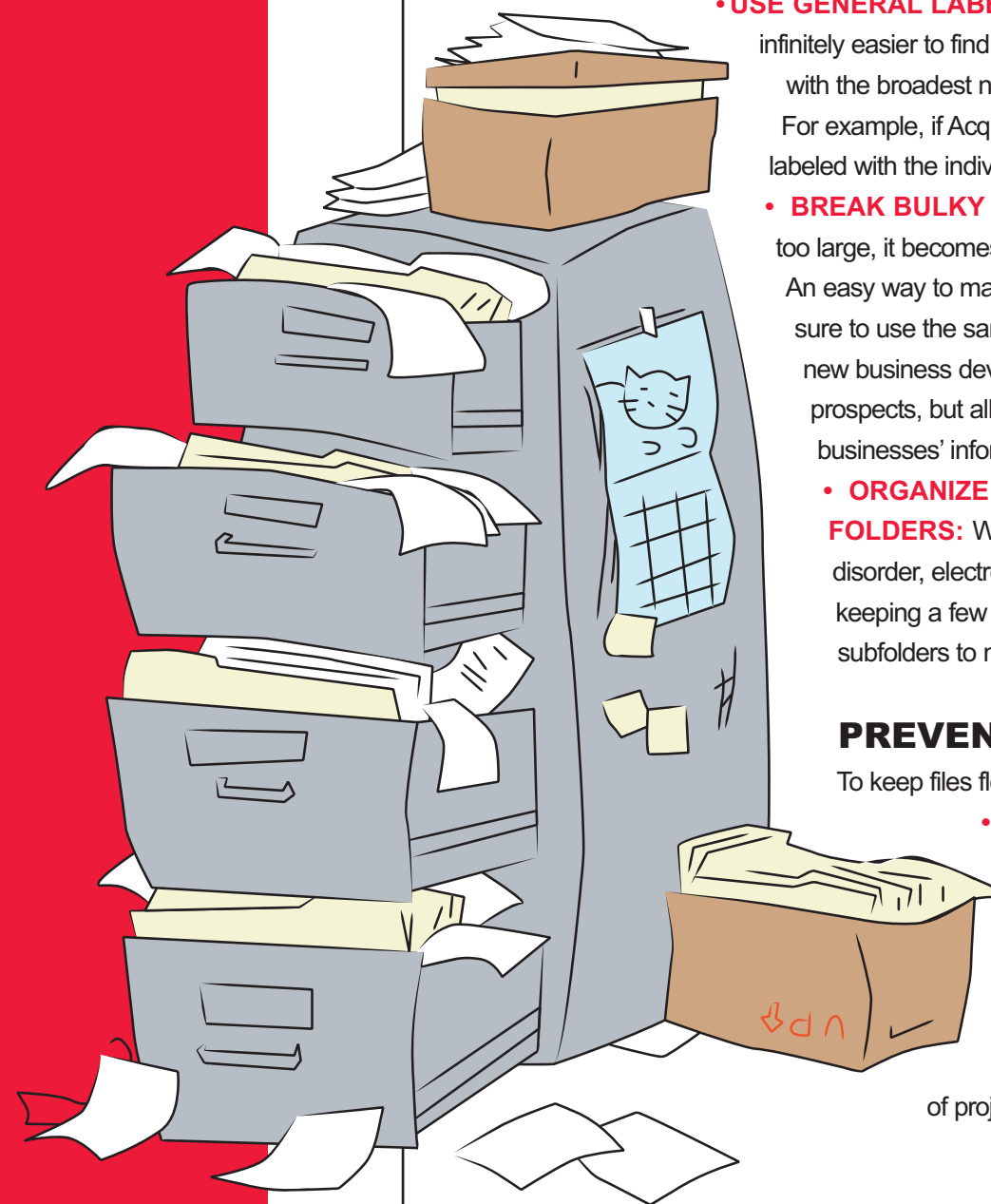
• **BREAK BULKY FILES INTO MULTIPLE FILE FOLDERS:** When files become too large, it becomes hard to find the information that is needed within the file folder. An easy way to manage the paperwork is to break them into smaller files, but be sure to use the same general name for the file as the original. For example, a new business development file can be broken down into active, former and future prospects, but all three new file labels need to reference that they include new businesses’ information.

• **ORGANIZE BOTH PAPER AND ONLINE INFORMATION INTO FILE FOLDERS:** While scattered papers on a desktop are a more visible sign of disorder, electronic files and e-mail also need to be organized. Instead of keeping a few hundred e-mails in an e-mail inbox, organize them into subfolders to make retrieval simple.

PREVENTING PRODUCTIVITY PERILS:

To keep files flexible and organized on a regular basis, Winston recommends:

- **Keep Up with Filing:** Dedicate a certain time of day to file paperwork. This can happen on a daily or weekly basis and only needs to take 15-30 minutes – or less if you keep files updated regularly.
- **Color or Monochrome:** Many people like to use color to differentiate projects. Winston recommends that if you use color in your files, have the different colors related to the different types of projects versus categorizing them by the types of projects.

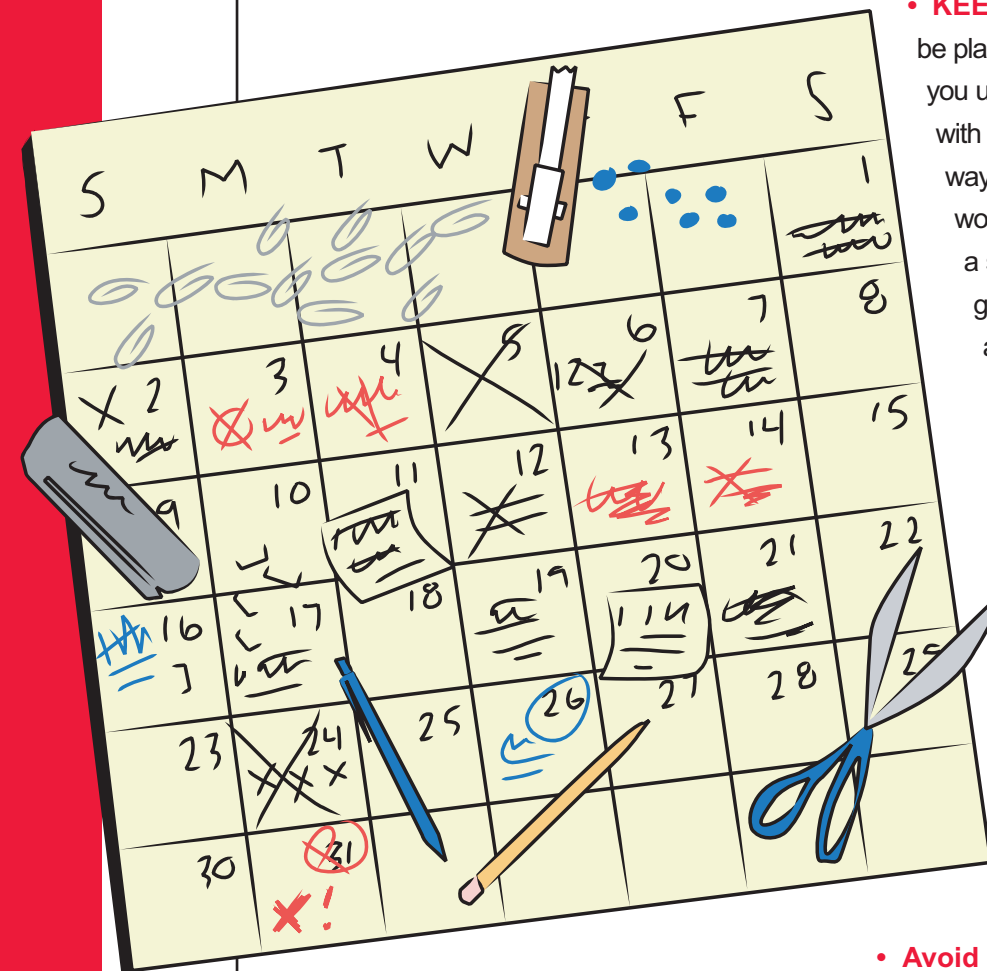


Day 4: Strengthen Everyday Organizational Skills

WINNING SOLUTIONS THAT HELP STRENGTHEN EVERYDAY ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

- **ERASABLE WALL CALENDAR:** Wall calendars can be used to show a broad view of the day, month or year, depending on the style of calendar. Tasks, events and appointments can be added, tracked and erased or checked off when completed.
- **DRY-ERASE MARKERS:** To keep wall calendars organized, use dry-erase markers so that appointments can be erased and moved as needed.
- **DESK ORGANIZER:** Keep supplies such as scissors, tape and pens in a single location that is easy to access.

An organized to-do list will definitely help shape up your office but like any fitness regimen, you will only get results if you stick to your program. If your desk is covered with papers and the file cabinets are stuffed and spilling over, your hard work could be in vain if you can't find the key information needed to finish a project on time. "Staying organized is an activity that you need to pay attention to every day," says Winston.



- **KEEP A SINGLE CALENDAR:** All appointments should be placed on a single calendar that you access every day. If you use a virtual calendar, be sure that it can be brought with you on the road, such as by syncing with a PDA. This way, appointments can be added while traveling. If you work with a larger group, keep track of the team by using a single calendar to organize major tasks within the group. Be sure that items on the centralized calendar are also on the calendars of individual team members responsible for the tasks.

- **CENTRALIZE SUPPLIES:** Searching for scissors in a messy drawer will not make you more productive. Rather, dedicate a single location to store supplies such as in a drawer or a desktop organizer. Wherever you keep these items, they should be in an area that is easy to access on a regular basis.

PREVENTING PRODUCTIVITY PERILS:

To keep organizational skills strong every day, Winston recommends:

- **Avoid Being Overwhelmed by Reading Material:** In today's information intense environment, it is challenging for a single person to keep up with all of the reading that needs to be accomplished. Instead of trying to tackle it all individually, assign different publications to various members of the team who should share highlights regularly.
- **Do the Hardest Items First:** When a big report overwhelms, if you focus on the hardest items first, you can finish them faster and get them out of the way. With the challenging parts completed, you will breeze through the easier items and accomplish the task in a timely manner.

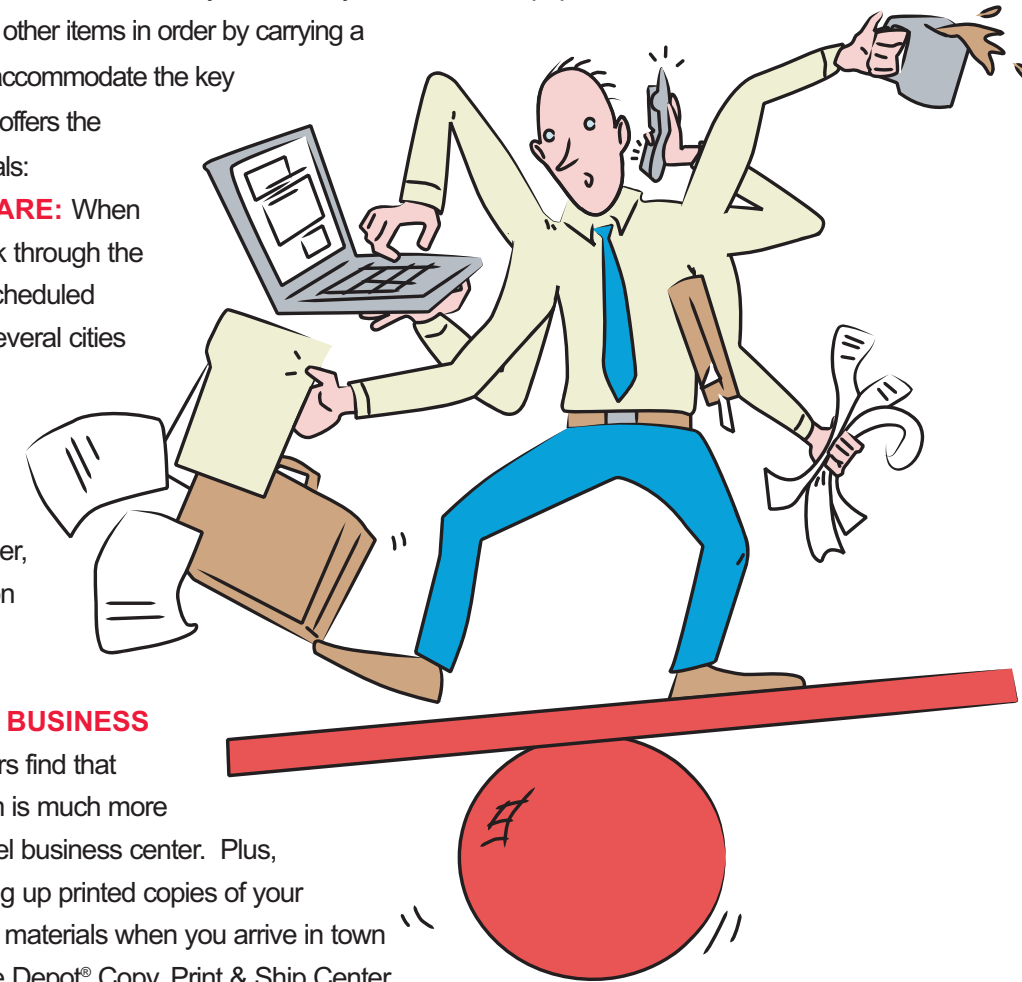
Day 5: Balance Organizational Needs on the Road

WINNING SOLUTIONS THAT HELP BALANCE ORGANIZATIONAL NEEDS ON THE ROAD

- **BRIEFCASE FOR TRAVEL WITH MULTIPLE POCKETS:** Store business cards, pens, cell phone, files, laptop, etc. when on the road.
- **USB FLASH MEMORY DRIVE:** Carry electronic documents and other digital files.
- **ENVELOPE OR FOLDER** for recording expenses.

Traveling can lead to disorder. If you work out of multiple offices or have meetings outside of the office, it is important to know what files you need to bring and what can stay at home. "Most traveling business people have adopted technology to help keep organized," says Winston. "However, in many situations, you will still need paper files and other paper documents. Help keep files and other items in order by carrying a slightly larger travel briefcase that can accommodate the key items you need on the road." Winston offers the following advice to traveling professionals:

- **KNOW WHERE YOUR FILES ARE:** When planning for an upcoming trip, think through the documents you will need for the scheduled meetings. If you are traveling to several cities in a row, consider shipping files to the different hotels where you will be staying. This way, you can minimize what you carry without being unprepared. However, always have a back-up available on a thumb drive or CD in case your materials don't arrive.
- **CARRY A LAPTOP OR USE A BUSINESS CENTER:** Many business travelers find that bringing their own laptop with them is much more productive than trying to use a hotel business center. Plus, you can lighten your load by picking up printed copies of your presentations, documents or other materials when you arrive in town for your meetings. The local Office Depot® Copy, Print & Ship Center is a good resource for fast and affordable printing.
- **USE FLASH MEMORY KEY RINGS TO CARRY IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS:** Instead of burning large documents to a CD, which can get scratched in transit, use a USB flash memory drive to carry important documents like large presentations. Many new USB flash drives can be connected to a PC without needing to install special software.



PREVENTING PRODUCTIVITY PERILS:

To keep organized when traveling, Winston recommends:

- **Record Expenses Regularly:** When traveling, it is easy to forget little expenses, such as morning coffee or a service tip. By keeping an ongoing log of expenses, you can ensure that you will be reimbursed for all legitimate travel costs. It is also important to keep receipts in one centralized place while on the road to minimize the time it takes to file an expense report or record your expenses for tracking purposes when back at the office.



ABOUT STEPHANIE WINSTON:

Stephanie Winston is recognized nationally as the country's preeminent professional organizer. She is the author of five books on organization and time management, including *The New York Times* Paperback best seller [Getting Organized](#). She is a member of the Author's Guild and was honored by the National Association of Professional Organizers as the founder of professional organizing. Stephanie's business, The Organizing Principle, is based in New York City.

ABOUT OFFICE DEPOT®:

With annual sales of over \$14 billion, Office Depot® provides more office products and services to more customers in more countries than any other company. Incorporated in 1986 and headquartered in Delray Beach, Florida, Office Depot® conducts business in 23 countries and employs 47,000 people worldwide. The Company operates under the Office Depot®, Viking Office Products®, Viking Direct®, Guilbert®, and Tech Depot® brand names.

Office Depot® is a leader in every distribution channel - from retail stores and contract delivery to catalogs and e-commerce. With over \$3.1 billion in online sales, the Company is the world's number three Internet retailer. As of September 24, 2005, Office Depot® has 1,009 retail stores in North America. Internationally, the Company conducts wholly-owned operations in 14 countries, and operates retail stores under joint venture and license arrangements in another seven countries.

The company's common stock is listed on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol ODP and is included in the S&P 500 Index. Additional press information can be found at: <http://mediarelations.officedepot.com>.