

# PR DUCTIVE

## Ignite! to clear a cluttered head

by  
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**a** man in Benson was arrested for attempted bank robbery. In his pocket the police found a “to do” list. On that list he had written, “rob a bank”. The robber explained to the judge that the reason he put this on his “to do” list was that he had “a lot on his mind”.

If criminals that probably don't have dinner to fix, meetings to attend, or children to get to soccer games have to keep a “to do” list then how are we expected to keep up with everything?

A large part of our stress comes from head clutter, too many things to remember. We are trying to remember so much while at the same time fearing that we will forget important matters. How do we organize the clutter in our head and alleviate the stress it causes?

**STEP ONE is to decide what your top priorities are.** Select two or three and put them on paper. You really must put these on paper and post them where you will see them regularly as well as carry them with you daily. Unfortunately, it is found that most business executives spend only 20% of their time on their top priorities. Having your priorities in writing allows you to stay focused, committing more time to what is most important. Now look at what you thought you needed to do today. Does it get you closer to your goals?

**STEP TWO is to put all the scattered thoughts and “to do’s” that are in your head onto paper or in**



**your PDA.** Of course you would not include any illegal activity as the above robber did. Now, take this list a step farther and note after each “to do” what category it falls into for example office (O), Email (@), weekend (W), or errands (E). By categorizing each to

do item you are creating a plan for implementing the list. You save a lot of time when you focus on one category of “to do’s” at a time. For instance, when you are on the computer you will complete all your emails at once, when you are in the office you have your list of office activities. Some to do’s I call “mini projects” (M); these are tasks that take less than ten minutes. They are quick projects like writing a thank you note or balancing your checkbook. These can be done in the pockets of time we otherwise let slip away, like waiting in the drive through line for your fast food, waiting for a client to show up, or waiting for the kids to finish karate lessons. Be sure to look over your list of mini projects and carry them with you each day, who knows when you will get that pocket of time.

**STEP THREE is to create uninterrupted time each day, time for you to focus on your top priorities.** Remember those goals? That means closing the door, literally and figuratively, on interruptions. Avoid the urge to let distractions interrupt you. So much of technol-

# Ignite! cluttered head (cont.)

ogy calls for instant responses like answering the cell phone, fax or email as it occurs. Be sure that you have control of technology and that it is not controlling you.

## STEP FOUR

**STEP FOUR is to take fifteen minutes each morning or evening to organize a plan of your “to do’s” with your goals at the forefront.** Studies show that for each minute of planning for the day you will save yourself ten minutes of execution. So plan each day and get back over an hour of your time.

Practice these four steps and release that head clutter called stress!



### 4-STEP RECAP

1. Decide what your top priorities are.
2. Put all the scattered thoughts and “to do’s” that are in your head onto paper or in your PDA.
3. Create uninterrupted time each day, time for you to focus on your top priorities.
4. Take fifteen minutes each morning or evening to organize a plan of your “to do’s” with your goals at the forefront.

As a Professional Organizer, Cyndy Ratcliffe works with home and small business owners in organizing their homes, offices and time. She received her bachelor’s degree in Business Administration from Ashland University in Ohio and was a senior level manager for over 20 years before launching Organizing Solutions, Inc.

Currently, Cyndy assists individuals to reduce stress, boost their image, and be more productive through speaking, training and hands-on coaching of organizing techniques.

Cyndy is a founding member and Vice President of The National Association of Professional Organizers, North Carolina Chapter, and a member of the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization.

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### SHARING STORIES WITH SUSAN

This poem was published in The Saturday Evening Post in 1949, under the title, “Time of the Mad Atom.” Seems that people were as rushed then as they are now!

*This is the age  
Of the half - read page.  
And the quick hash  
And the mad dash.  
The bright night  
With the nerves tight.  
The plane hop  
With the brief stop.  
The lamp tan  
In a short span.  
The **BIG** Shot  
In a good spot.  
And the brain strain  
The heart pain.  
And the cat naps  
Till the spring snaps -  
And the fun's done!*

Photo by Beth Wroblewski

I've always loved the outdoors; wild flowers and breathtaking landscapes our country offers. Never having any formal photography instruction I purchased my first “real” camera and chose Minolta. I decided to take an outdoor photography class and loved it so much that I took another.

I practice shooting in the Necedah Wildlife Refuge and the Wisconsin countryside where I reside. The photos in this issue of Ignite were taken in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (sunrise) and Smoky Mountain National Park (waterfall).

To purchase this picture, contact [Ken@theapexgallery.com](mailto:Ken@theapexgallery.com) where Beth's work is featured and is beautifully framed.