

## IN THIS ISSUE

[Main Article](#)  
[Productivity Article](#)  
[Special Offer](#)  
[Tips & Tricks](#)

## TESTIMONIAL

*"I believe all companies, and its executives, are facing increased demands for information management, especially e-mail volume. Take Back Your Life creates a simple, yet comprehensive solution to handle these demands."*

Anthony Ridnell,  
Chief Executive Officer  
TR International Inc.

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[Group Seminars \(TBYL\)](#)

[Consulting Services \(OAP\)](#)

Happy Holidays! As you wrap-up 2009, and as we all conclude an unprecedented challenging financial year, I invite you to take time to review and celebrate all that you and your colleagues have achieved.

All of McGhee's programs include a process of regular acknowledgement in order to balance the constant course correcting and to foster learning. In this issue of the *Insider's Link to Productivity*, we offer advice for self-acknowledgement and for creating your 2010 Productivity Guidelines as well as steps to a work-free holiday vacation.

On behalf of everyone here at McGhee, thank you for your partnership this year and your commitment to creating a culture of true productivity in your organizations.

- Laurie Oswald, Director of Sales & Marketing

To learn more about our products and services please [click here](#).

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## *Establish Your 2010 Productivity Guidelines Before the New Year*

As we move into 2010, it is important to reflect on both our accomplishments and our disappointments in a conscious way. By incorporating lessons from these experiences into guidelines for how to approach the coming year, we help ensure that we move forward without repeating the same mistakes or bad habits.

To create your own "Productivity Guidelines" for 2010, all you need to do is answer these four questions:

### **1. What did you accomplish in 2009?**

Start by writing a list of all your personal and business accomplishments for 2009. This process will take about 5-10 minutes; keep writing until you exhaust all the possibilities. If need be, review your calendar to jog your memory.

You'll be surprised by how much you've completed and what you've accomplished. Next, allow yourself a quiet moment to sincerely acknowledge what you got done. (Or maybe a not-so-quiet moment!) Most of us are moving so quickly that we rarely stop to acknowledge and celebrate what we've accomplished. In fact, it's often easier for us to judge what we didn't do and what

## TIPS & TRICKS

### Instructions for Turning On the Out of Office Assistant

We suggest using the following text:

Thanks for your message. I will be out of the office until XX/XX/XX without access to e-mail. If you need immediate assistance, please contact XXXXXXXX at 000-000-0000 in my absence.

Thanks for supporting me in managing my e-mail while I'm out of the office.

we could have done better, instead of what we did complete and what we did achieve. Acknowledgement is what motivates and inspires us to move forward.

### **2. What qualities and strengths helped you to successfully achieve these goals and activities?**

Take a moment and review your successes and ask yourself: "What qualities or strengths did I use to complete these activities?" Identify exactly what it was that you did that worked. For example, was it your focus, a particular skill you practiced, enrolling the assistance of others, an effective strategy, pre-planning, generous communication, or your enthusiasm?

### **3. What were your biggest disappointments in 2009?**

Nobody enjoys reviewing their disappointments, but there are fabulous lessons hidden in these regrets. Some of our clients' greatest insights have come from reflecting on their disappointments. Take 5-10 minutes and list your disappointments from 2009. Some areas you might explore include:

- Things you wanted to do and didn't
- Things you could have done better
- People you let down (and why)
- Times you didn't take care of yourself or your family
- When you lost control of your work/life balance
- When you weren't being honest, quickly enough
- Commitments you should have renegotiated

### **4. What could you have done differently to have avoided these disappointments?**

Take 5-10 minutes to list the lessons you learned from these disappointments. Here are a few examples:

- Make hard decisions quickly, despite the risks
- Only agree to activities that fit onto the calendar
- Book an hour of uninterrupted time a day to do e-mail
- Review key objectives weekly and note the status

You've now written down the lessons you've learned from both your successes and disappointments, which can be used to create your personal productivity guidelines.

Here are a few examples of personal and business guidelines:

- Be accountable, consistently focusing on objectives
- Book time on calendar to complete important tasks and honor it
- Be strong and say "no" to activities that don't link to objectives
- Pre-plan outdoor adventures on the calendar

You'll notice these statements are written in a positive format, reminding you of the specific qualities and strengths that can help you to achieve your goals productively. The more aware you are of these behaviors, the easier it will be to practice them and reap the benefits from honoring them. They also support you in acknowledging what you're doing that's working, which can be extremely motivating.

We hope this exercise leaves you feeling excited and ready for the new year. For assistance with creating business guidelines for your entire team via our Objective Accountability Program, contact: [info@mcgheepro.com](mailto:info@mcgheepro.com)

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### *Disconnect this Holiday Season with 5 Steps to a Work-Free Vacation*

By: Jennifer Wilmoth, McGhee Senior Consultant

Do you sneak away during holidays and vacations to purge accumulating e-mail messages? Or are you the type to "unplug" physically, but mentally worry about the consequences? If this sounds like you, don't worry, you're not alone. Many of our clients find it difficult to truly be on vacation. Below are a few things that can help you relax, stay present and enjoy your time off.

**Prepare others** - Two to three weeks prior to going on vacation, let others know of your vacation plans and the dates you will be out of the office.

**Manage Expectations** - Let your colleagues know which requests you will be able to accomplish before you leave and which requests will need to wait until your return. Clear communication will enable you and your team to better delegate or renegotiate.

**Send a reminder** - Two or three days before you go, send an e-mail reminding your team that you will be leaving and ask them to defer their communications by tracking information in a 1:1 category.

**Turn your Out of Office (OOF) notification on** - The OOF is a great tool for letting others know when you will be out of the office and who to contact in your absence.

**Plan catch-up time** - You already know that you'll come back to a significant amount of e-mail, so schedule catch-up time. Some clients give themselves an entire day, preparing others that they'll be back in the office but will be unavailable the first day while they tackle the inbox.

Going on vacation can be a great way for you to restore balance and recharge. You've made the effort to plan time away, now go enjoy it!

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McGhee Productivity Solutions, Inc. (McGhee) provides consulting services, tools and education to increase productivity and work/life balance. Based in Denver, CO, McGhee integrates its proven methods and protocols with Microsoft technology to deliver innovative action-management strategies to individuals and organizations worldwide. From the boardroom to the knowledge worker, the McGhee approach maximizes technology investments, improves job satisfaction and drives sustainable productivity throughout an organization. Sally McGhee, CEO, is the author of the popular book series Take Back Your Life! Using Microsoft Outlook to Get Organized and Stay Organized.

McGhee is in the process of becoming a Certified Woman-Owned Business