



The Power of Completion

Why not start 2005 with a clean slate and a ton of energy?

With the year rapidly coming to a close, it's a great time to set the tone for the New Year. How about approaching it with a clean slate, and with lots of energy and enthusiasm?

I can already hear a few of you saying "I've got too much to do and not enough time!" Actually, you can create the time and you can make it happen, it's pretty easy...it just takes a little determination and five simple steps:

1. Complete a "mind sweep" list.
2. Declare items "complete" and take them off your list.
3. Let go of unsupportive incompletes that don't link to your 2005 objectives.
4. Decide which items you can complete by year end and get them done.
5. Clean out the junk you've been hanging onto for years.

Whenever you have "incomplete actions" in your life, no matter how insignificant, some part of your unconscious or conscious mind focuses on them and records them as "incomplete" and reminds you randomly to complete them. You've probably found yourself in a meeting remembering to "pick up the dry cleaning" even though you can't do anything about it at that time. Yes, it is frustrating, but that's how the brain works. Another way to think about it is that your mind allocates "attention

Quick Tip: Putting Your Strategic Next Actions on Your Calendar

When you identify a Strategic Next Action (SNA) that you need to complete, move it onto your Calendar by following these steps:

1. Right-click and drag the Task onto a specific date on the Calendar.
2. From the shortcut menu select Move Here As Appointment With Attachment.

An Appointment dialog box opens for the task and the task's Subject Line is pre-filled with the task name.

3. In the task's Appointment dialog box, verify the date and choose the Start Time and End Time you want for the appointment.
4. Click Save and Close.

Did You Catch Our Webcasts on Microsoft.

units” to incompletes. This enables you to have your attention on them, to support you in remembering to complete them. When you have a lot of incompletes you have a lot of attention allocated to them. This can cause stress, lack of energy, and inability to focus and be excited about the future. For some of you, it can eventually result in a kind of paralysis because you just don’t quite know what to tackle next.

You can “take back you energy and enthusiasm” by taking control of your incompletes. This time of year is one of the best times to tackle this. The first step in the process is to recognize what incompletes you have so you can decide what to do with them.

Step 1: Complete a “mind sweep”

A mind sweep is an exercise where you sit down at your desk for 20 minutes, shut the door, turn off the phone, and write a list of all the things you can think of that are incomplete in both your personal and business life. I recommend using the TaskPad in Microsoft Office Outlook to do this. You can create a new task for each incomplete you think of. There is no need to organize the list, just type things into the TaskPad randomly as you think of them. Personal items, business items, small insignificant items, or priority items. Once you get these actions out of your head and into your computer they become much easier to manage and you’ll feel lighter immediately. A mind sweep is a very liberating process, now or at any time of the year.

Step 2: Declare items “complete” and take them off the list

Once your list is done, read through it carefully and identify any items that you can complete just by declaring them “complete.” One of the items on my list was “read books on night stand.” Over the year, I had slowly added books to my nightstand and the

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Sally McGhee and John Wittry did a four-part series of webcasts with Microsoft during October and November. All were targeted at more efficient processing of e-mail and other information in Outlook. If you are interested in seeing them, the webcasts are archived and are available by clicking on the titles below:

[E-mail Tips to Set the Rules for Productivity](#)

[Tips for Using Microsoft Office Outlook to Remove the Clutter from Your Computer \(and Your Mind\)](#)

[Tips for Reducing Your Inbox from Thousands to Just a Few E-mails](#)

[Tips for Writing More Effective E-mail](#)

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pile had progressively gotten rather tall. Of course I fully intended to read each of these books; however, the truth was that it was not going to happen this year. I declared this task “complete” except for one book which I left on my nightstand to read. The others I placed on my bookshelf to pull off at a later date if I wanted to. What a relief -- five less incompletes to worry about, fewer things collecting dust on my nightstand, and I could also quit worrying about the stack falling over onto my head in the middle of the night!

Also on my list was “read business magazines.” I had a wicker basket in my office full of magazines that I had told myself I’d review and then toss them out. Of course the time to review them had never presented itself. I swallowed hard, picked up the basket and put them ALL into the recycle bin. I declared that item “complete” and boy, did it feel good.

I was intoxicated by the process and continued looking for items at home and work to declare complete and let go of. By the time I was done, I had so much energy, I didn’t want to stop.

Step 3: Let go of unsupportive incompletes that don’t support your 2005 objectives

Look through your list again, and ask yourself “Does completing this item directly impact my objectives for 2005?” Be honest with your answer and if it does not, renegotiate it or let it go and cross it off the list. Disengaging from incompletes that don’t support your objectives will free up enormous amounts of energy. Although it can be tough to do, it is well worth the effort.

On my incomplete list I had a development project related to creating a piece of software. But as I looked at my 2005 objectives this project didn’t directly impact them. It was a good idea and it

would make a difference to our customers, but it didn't support my 2005 goals. I deleted it, and with it a whole set of supporting projects.

I encourage you to take a moment to review your list and make sure your incompletes truly support your objectives in 2005 and if they don't, renegotiate or delete those items.

Step 4: Decide which items you can complete by year end and get them done

Review your list one more time and identify the tasks you can commit to completing before the end of the year. Do an honest "reality check" on these commitments. Take the ones you're sure you can do and drag and drop them from the TaskPad onto your calendar, allocating a specific day and time to complete them. When you plan your tasks on your calendar you'll increase your chances of getting them done. Our statistics show there is a 75% greater chance you'll complete your tasks if they're planned on your calendar as opposed to being written on your to-do list. Once they are planned it gives you a reality check on your time, helping you see exactly what you need to do by when. Once it is on the calendar you'll have a much higher level of confidence that it will get done, and it will allow you to take your attention off of it until it is time to do it.

Step 5: "Clean out" the junk you have been hanging onto for years

Lastly, walk around your house and office and identify the "stuff" you've been hanging onto year after year after year. That credenza in your office: I know you've got stuff on there that you have not referred to in years - let it go! That pile of "to read" magazines -- throw them out. Those 2004 financial papers; archive them so you have space for 2005 papers. Check out your wardrobe. That back closet

with the clothes you'll wear again when you lose ten pounds: they're probably out of fashion.

Celebrate your success when you lose the weight by buying new ones, and get rid of that old stuff. Some of you have so much stuff in our closets that when you clean them out you'll find all kinds of clothes to wear that you did not know you even had! You'll create more energy and enthusiasm for the New Year if you let go of the stuff you're hanging onto from 2004. Be courageous and just let it go.

I challenge you to move into 2005 with a clean slate – to spend a weekend and just clean up those papers on your desk, let go of those old projects, give away those clothes you're not wearing and complete the items you can complete.

One of the best ways to create energy and enthusiasm for 2005 is to finish up with 2004. We all avoid doing this and yet the minute you start you'll not be able to stop. It's the best therapy in the world and costs nothing!

I dare you: take one step and start the process. You'll be so inspired you'll not stop till it's done.