

**'Getting a Grip on the Paper  
War - Managing information in the modern office'**  
by Robyn Pearce of TimeLogic

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1. The next book is out! I'm thrilled to tell you that my second title for this year is out - 'Getting a Grip on the Paper War - Managing information in the modern office'.  
[Http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/index.html](http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/index.html)

Just over a week ago we celebrated with the first book launch, in Dunedin, and very successful it was. After a mini-seminar based around 'Getting a Grip on the Paper War', 57 happy folk headed

back to their offices, many clutching copies of the book, and fired with reforming zeal!

Welcome to this ezine, Dunedin friends (and all the other new subscribers from other places) - I look forward to hearing your success stories!

(See the Coming Events for other sessions already booked or in the process of being organised around New Zealand, and if you'd like a mini-seminar like the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce for your workplace or region, drop a line to [paperwar@gettingagripontime.com](mailto:paperwar@gettingagripontime.com) )

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/training/events.html>

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2. Here's a tiny excerpt from the new book for you.

Three valid reasons for chaos (and the rest are excuses, my friend!)

I've identified three very legitimate reasons why people struggle through an ever-swelling ocean of paper, and then produce a wonderful array of stories to support their behavior.

1. You don't know how. The problems's too big and you don't have a clue where to start.
2. You haven't been taught in a way that suits your processing style.
3. You know your habits need attention, but you don't want to loose the positive benefits (secondary gains) of your current methods.

The following story answers the second issue, (and you'll have to read the book to get help with the other two!)

Suzanne was CEO of a busy recruitment company in Sydney. I'd just finished running a program for her and her staff. At the end of the day, with a faint glimmer of hope in her eye, she asked me to help sort out her office and systems: she was overwhelmed with the sheer volume of paperwork and 'stuff'. Her staff overheard, and laughed disbelievingly.

'She's beyond help - we've tried.'

Several times they'd set up systems for her, explained to her

what they'd done, and expected her to remember and apply their methods. Did it work? No. Consequently, she thought she was hopeless (and so did they) and her frustration levels were very high. Problem was, she didn't own the system, hadn't been involved with creating it, had no ownership and therefore minimal understanding.

I find that most people who struggle with this issue (and Suzanne was no exception) have to experience the sort-out and the set-up at a cellular and kinaesthetic (or tactile) hands-on level before they make any sense of it. They're not easily able to apply auditory (or spoken) instructions, or they would probably have already done it.

The first thing I noticed, once we commenced the 'clean-up', was that she deferred decisions. She'd pick up a piece of paper; look at it; put it down - in a different pile. You could just about hear the thoughts go ratchet, clatter, click in her brain: 'I can't think about this right now - it will take too long'. She then repeated the same pattern with the next, and the next, and the next piece of paper.

To beat the problem she needed new behaviour. Every time she started to paper shuffle I stopped her. 'What category is this item?' was the questions. Once named, I took it out of her hands and placed it on the floor with other things of the same type, putting like with like.

The hardest part was the first ten minutes. I'm sure Suzanne felt like snapping at me, but we had to stop her old automatic behavior (alias a habit!)

However, within ten minutes she got past the discomfort, her brain (at a deep level) started to create a new pathway, and suddenly she found the rhythm. And then there was no stopping her. Because she's (at least in part) a kinaesthetic processor she just needed to stay with the new hands-on experience until her brain had time to make sense of the process. It took us a few hours, but her office was fabulous when we finished, and she was buzzing with excitement.

As we worked on her office another story happened outside her door. One of her staff had a similar problem (on a much smaller scale). He came and watched the process for the first twenty minutes, asked a few questions, and then ducked out to start his own cleanup. He only needed a short visual preview and auditory instructions, for when I walked past his desk half an hour later, the job was almost finished.

I heard from Suzanne a couple of years later. She'd begun her own

business from home, based in the Blue Mountains, and was delighted to tell me that she was still applying the process with great success, and had never degenerated back to the chaotic level I'd first seen. All she needed was to learn in a way that suited her learning (or processing) style.

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Do you like a bargain? (silly question!)

A client recently rang to say 'Why can't I find your 'Getting A Grip' pack on your website?'

His boss had just won a 3-pack of my first three books and he wanted the same. So, if you wondered the same thing, you can get them now, at a lovely discount, at

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/bargains.html>

I've also added a 4-pack to include this new book. (I'm sometimes slow, but I don't need to be told twice! Thanks Lynsey!)

And 'Getting a Grip on Life - Goals Toolkit', the easy goal-setting, life-balance, appraisal and career planning tool that came out a few months ago is also there for you - it's been burning holes in the postal system as orders fly in.

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/products/goals-toolkit.html>

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### 3. Coming Events

Many of my events are inhouse or corporate work, but we've had so many requests for public events that there may be something near you, and of course with the book launch this gives a wider range of people a chance to participate.

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/training/events.html>

Canberra, Australia:

We've got a public one-day 'Getting a Grip on Time' workshop,

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/training/seminar-21.10.03.html>

This is followed by an accreditation programme on October 21-23rd for those who wish to add my programmes to their portfolio - either training companies or companies who wish to license their internal trainers

<http://www.gettingagripontime.com/associates.html>

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4. Do you REALLY need more storage? Check out Ricardo Semler's story from Chapter 5 Filing Equipment (in the new book)

A cautionary tale

There's one major caution I want to leave you with before you go charging off to buy fancy filing systems, however. Do you really need them?

Brazilian Ricardo Semler illustrates this point in his best-selling management book 'Maverick'. With very unorthodox methods he turned the company he inherited on his fathers' death into one of Latin America's fastest growing companies, in a time of savage recession. After a few years he turned his attention to the number of files the company kept.

'We were in yet another meeting, hacking our way through an agenda of small, bureaucratic items like so many weeds in an overgrown garden, when we came to the purchase of \$50,000 worth of filing cabinets... We didn't buy a single new filing cabinet that day. Instead, we decided to stop the company for half a day and hold the First Biannual Semco File Inspection and Clean-Out.

... Our instructions were simple: we told everyone to look inside every file folder and purge every non-essential piece of paper. They were to ask themselves a question attributed to Alfred Sloan of General Motors: "What is the worst thing that can happen if I throw this out?"...

I was one of Semco's biggest file hogs, with four large cabinets and a request for two more. And that was on top of the two and a half cabinets each of my three secretaries had.

After our clean up I trimmed down to a single cabinet, and that was pretty much how it went throughout the company... The clean up went so well that when everyone had finished Semco auctioned off dozens of unwanted filing cabinets.

That made us think more about our compulsion to collect. We realised that we were filing lots of documents we had no conceivable reason to keep, making more work for ourselves than a natural business required. Just how much of our clerical work, we asked ourselves, was similarly unnecessary?' (and you'll have to get his book to find out what else they did ... it's well worth the read!)

