



One of the greatest wastes of our professional time is looking for something that we have lost in our computer or in our office. Professionals who are weak in object management lose anywhere from 10-60 minutes a day, searching for misplaced books, articles, forms, announcements, email, manuals, memos, presentation slides, office tools, research equipment and other physical or digital objects they put somewhere casually when they were in a hurry, feeling lazy, or had no special place for them. If my calculations are correct, this wasted time translates to 40-240 hours of waste each year for someone who works 40 hours a week, 48 weeks a year. What is even more surprising is that this translates into 1-6 full weeks of work every year, or 40-240 weeks of work throughout a 40-year career. Wasting this much time on merely looking for things that we have lost or misplaced is not very mature or professional. Imagine how much more work could have been accomplished, expertise could have been developed, or projects could have been completed early, if this time had been used more wisely—not to mention the additional income that could have been generated or free time that could have been created to pursue other activities.

If you are weak at object management, then our consulting team recommends the following:

1. Reflect carefully on your current professional practices to identify what you tend to have the most trouble finding.
2. Create a simple system for organizing things so that everything has a logical and convenient location, for easy storage and retrieval.
3. Develop a habit of putting things in their correct places and returning them there after you use them.
4. Continually evaluate your practices to see if you can discover better, more efficient ways to organize your work environment.
5. Simplify your professional life by only keeping things you really need and discarding the rest.
6. Apply these same guidelines to your life at home so you can save time there as well.

If you follow this simple advice, you will surely enjoy more efficient work, greater productivity, and much more free time to use as you please.

## Relevant Ideas from Great Thinkers

*Lost time is never found again.* Benjamin Franklin

*If you don't have time to do it right, when will you have time to do it over?* John Wooden

<sup>1</sup>*For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven.* <sup>6</sup>*A time to search and a time to quit searching. A time to keep and a time to throw away.*

King Solomon (Ecclesiastes 3:1 and 3:6, Bible)