

The Five S's

Five Steps To A More Organized New Year!

In all of my workshops, as part of the introductions I ask several questions. One of these is, "What qualities do you see in others that you would like to develop more fully in yourself?"

The answer for many of the participants is organization.

One common reason for not following through on goals or New Year's Resolutions is that people don't write manageable action steps. Additionally, not allowing enough time to reach the goal can be overwhelming.

Keeping the ancient proverb of "the journey of 1000 miles begins with a single step" in mind can help keep your expectations reasonable. Another way of thinking about it is that you cannot lose 10 pounds by tomorrow. Taking small, manageable steps helps to make the total goal more easily attainable.

The Five S's provide a strategy for using small, simple steps to get, and stay, organized.

Choose a room, an office, a desk or filing cabinet, a garage, laundry room, workspace, etc., rather than attempting to do everything all at once. There will be overlap between some of the categories.

Japanese	English Translation	Meaning
Seiri	Sort	Keep the things that use, discard what you don't
Seiso	Shine	Clean, clean, clean
Seiton	Straighten	A place for everything and everything in its place
Seiketsu	Systematize	The process you use to maintain the first 3 S's
Shitsuke	Sustain	Discipline / Use the processes that you created

Sort: This first stage is to go through everything and decide what you use regularly, sometimes and not at all. The *not at all* category items should either be discarded, given away, or at least stored in a manner or place where it is out of the way. What is left will be handled by one of the other S's.

Shine: Clean everything! If possible, remove items from shelves and bookcases.

Straighten: Decide what goes together and the best place for each item, file, tool, etc., and put them there. Use labels, if necessary, to help keep things in their places and easy to access.

Systematize: How will you keep things sorted, shined, and straightened? Will there be a few minutes daily? Once a week? Once a month? How will you evaluate the effectiveness of your system?

Sustain: This stage is the discipline that is required to follow-through on your system processes. What is the standard of organization, cleanliness, etc. How long does it really take to keep things in order?

Consistent evaluation of the process and results, and looking for improvements is the key to sustaining your efforts for a more organized year.