Administrative Tips

Organizing e-mail files
"After deleting e-mail and later wishing I had it, I began saving it for future reference. Soon I had scores of entries to scroll. Then I discovered I could organize!"
Many e-mail programs offer the option of creating labeled folders in which to save both received and sent e-mail. If all your e-mail now goes into one mailbox, you will enjoy the effectiveness of organization by folders. Individual folders can be created for each week or month, for each person with whom you regularly correspond, or for each topic with which you routinely deal. These folders work just like those in other software programs and allow you to quickly find what you need.

Controlling Phone Calls
"I was spending too much time on incoming phone calls, so I decided to keep a two-week log of those calls. The log identifies who called, why, and the time spent."
Once armed with this information, set a time limit for certain calls; an egg timer can be used as a cue for wrapping up. Use businesslike but friendly phrases to signal the conclusion of the conversation: *"Before we hang up, let me be sure I have this right"* or *"Let me get right on this. Can you call me back for follow-up tomorrow?"*

Control outgoing calls too. Start with the purpose of your call. Instead of, *"Hi. This is Ann. How are you doing today?"* try *"Hello. This is Ann. I have the information you asked for."* You may even mention your time limit: "I've got just two minutes but I wanted to run this by you…"

Predetermined hand signals (for a short call, long call, or emergency call) can be helpful when one staff member is on the phone and another member walks in.

Paper management
Has anybody seen that paperless office we read so much about a few years ago? Hardly! Paper management is still an essential skill.

1. Handle paper as few times as possible. Each time you pick up a document, move it toward its purpose: route it, file it, pitch it, or put it in an action or project folder.

2. Replace the horizontal IN baskets on your desk with a vertical file. Use colored folders to categorize action files: To order, To file, Newsletter, Reservations, etc.

3. Label the outside of file cabinet drawers clearly. In the front of each drawer put a directory of its contents by topic.

4. Keep your desktop clear of all papers except those dealing with the project on which you are working.

5. Use stacking bins or stationery racks for letterhead, envelopes, notepaper, catalogs, magazines, and other reading materials. Jot the date on each new catalog as it arrives and discard the one it replaces.

6. Schedule the first Monday of each quarter, or another time of your choosing, to trim files and update directories.

7. Some documents can be stored on disks only, no paper needed. Keep one backup in the office, another safely off-site.

8. Establish procedures for records of giving. Once offering amounts are entered on statements, envelopes are usually kept a year or two, then discard.

9. For historical purposes, keep a library copy of each newsletter and bulletin.

10. Keep a file of documents printed in the office. Annual notebooks work well; file from the back forward with the newest document to the front. Discard at the end of the year or whenever no longer useful.

Excerpted from the January/February issue of PROFILE The Church Office Professional's Information Source. Copyright Ó 2002 Communication Resources, Inc.