

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:04] DC: It takes the right skills and the right innovation to design and manage meaningful print marketing solutions. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse, where we explore all facets of print and marketing that create stellar communications and sales opportunities for business success. I'm your host, Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Thanks for tuning in. Listen long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:32] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. More specifically, we are here with the Time Management Tips in 20 Podcast, which means I am here with my very time minute frugal, your minute frugal, Sarah Ohanesian, the CEO of SO Productive, and my personal time management Sherpa. Hello.

[0:00:59] SO: Hi. How you doing?

[0:01:01] DC: I'm good. I'm good. This topic is near and dear to my heart. We are going to be speaking about wasting time on clutter, today. Even just saying it, even just saying the word clutter gives me an emotional response, because I am sitting in my office and there is clutter to the left of me, clutter to the right. Here I am stuck in the middle with you, but that is what I'm dealing with right now. Please, take it away and help.

[0:01:36] SO: Happy to. Well, I think one of the things we think about clutter as this issue that we don't give much weight to, it's just there. So, my point in wanting to do this particular episode today was that we underestimate the impact that clutter has on our time, on our mental sanity, and on things that might be stressing us out. I want to share a couple of stats if I may. Price Waterhouse Cooper, they approximated that \$150 is wasted in people, just searching for misfiled documents and \$220 in recreation of some of these documents. When we're talking about organizations wasting time, certainly, but also physical money recreating things.

Another step that's going to blow your mind. This is Deloitte, an average of three weeks for the average US manager looking for papers and digital files that have been mislabeled, misfiled, or lost. Three hours a week looking for things. Great. Okay. Then the final set I want to share is, this is in larger organizations with over a thousand knowledge workers, but \$2.5 to \$3.5 million per year lost in searching for information and recreating documents. Hope those stats help to say we have a clutter problem on our hands at work, certainly.

[0:03:03] DC: I mean, there's revolutions that have been started about the piles of paper next to the copy machines and the printers in the offices. I'll just put that email out 16 times because I can't find it again. I'm really glad that you mentioned mental. That's because that's what I want to focus on. Although, I completely commiserate with everything you're saying. I name my own files and I still can't find them sometimes. I look where I think they should be. Once they're not there, then it becomes a crapshoot. It could be anywhere.

I have even gone to the point of searching in my image library on my website to see what I named an image when I uploaded it to find the native file on my computer. I agree with you. I agree with you. I agree with you, so much that so much time is wasted on looking for things. But what really gets me and paralyzes me sometimes into inaction or the action being "screw it, that couch, that TV, and those organic refreshments look very nice right now" as supposed to dealing with this pile of stuff on my dining room table, which I threw there because I had a month of traveling to events and now, I've got to go through it. Including, mail. I found a jury summons the other day, which wasn't so great because it was actually almost overdue and I almost got in trouble.

Mentally, when I remove some of that clutter, even when I do it, okay, I'm going to stay with the mental thing first. When I walk in my house and there is a clear view and I don't see a pile of paper somewhere, I feel lighter if that makes any sense. If I walk in and I see these print samples here, and there's a pile of business cards from an event here, and there's mail I need to go through here, like I said, I get completely stressed out and I almost can't do anything until the piles get bigger and bigger and bigger.

On the contrary, I just want to say this one crazy thing. Now, I'm telling everybody, like my complete psychological clutter issues, but I cannot turn off my computer if my desktop is

cluttered. I can't do it. The thought of coming to my desk the next day and seeing files all over my screen. I can't even finish that sentence, because I can't allow it to happen. I feel like I can't start the day fresh unless it's clean, but it's the only thing I have a regiment about. Okay, there's a lot to unpack Dr. Ohanesian, so put on your psychological cap, and let's tackle some of this. By the way, there's no way I'm alone in this out there in the world, although maybe cleaning the desktop and not dealing with everything else is a different story.

[0:06:10] SO: For the record, I am not a medical doctor in any way. This is just my own personal advice for you and really just sharing from experience. Deborah and I have talked about this quite a bit. One tip I had, and Deborah, you touched on this a little bit is to have work zones and to have places where things are meant to live in your home, in your office. The mail is a great example. I'm shared a few times. My husband owns a printed direct mail company. We've got mail coming in all the time. When we moved into our house, our mailman said, "What is going on here? Why do you all get so much mail?" Because we get a seat from every client.

When we recently redid our kitchen, one of the things that was really critical, I'm like, the stove is great, like all the things you think you need in the kitchen is great. The thing I care about the most is that there is a physical place for us to keep the mail. When you're thinking about how to set up your space and to think about your work zones, I wanted to think about what really does stress you out that mental side of it, like what's getting in the way? What's stressing you out? What's causing you extra work? That's something to think about. How can I accommodate for this?

In my house, the mail is a real situation. Thinking about what places you need to be dedicated to a specific function. Oftentimes, we are guilty of working from the couch, we can bring the laptop anywhere. We can work from bed if we want to. Thinking about having physical spaces to actually do your work and to have zones that have a purpose is really critical here.

Again, in my case, that's a place to put the mail. It's a place to have a physical office with a desk, because our brains, it's actually, not great for us to be working and doing things in different environments. Instead, my first tip is to have these really pretty strict spaces that this is the item that goes here. this is the activity that I do in this particular space. The bedroom has

been for sleeping. The kitchen has been for cooking. The desk area is likely where you can be doing your work.

[0:08:11] DC: Oh, what about people who work in offices?

[0:08:14] SO: Yeah, absolutely. The same thing can apply for offices is to think about what would be helpful to have in your immediate space. Then I love what you touched on earlier is physically decluttering that space at the end of the day, whether that's the physical desk and or the physical desktop computer, those digital files. But one of my favorite tips is at the end of the day, do that quick shut down and declutter your workspace, wherever that is, home or in an office before you depart that area for the end of the day.

Okay, so let's get into, I have a bunch of tips then for organizing your space. The first is what I just touched on is to declutter and back to that stressful side of it. So often, we get to the end of the day, we're racing towards the finish line and maybe you have to pick up your kid from school or you have to race to a networking event really quickly. So, we leave our workspace abruptly instead taking that few minutes to declutter the space, I think is really, really critical as a starting point.

The other thing I would do here is think about what is going to be most functional in that space. Having things and I'm pointing kind of around my job, I talk with my hands a lot despite this being a podcast. The pens are quickly accessible. The notepads are quickly accessible. If you're a Post-it note person, quickly accessible. What are those things that you need all of the time throughout the course of your working day? Then some of the other items you can have more organized off to the side, but really think about functionally, like what's the flow of your work?

I mean, quite literally here, how do you function throughout the course of the day and what supplies do you need readily available? So, setting up your workspace to be functional, I think is really important. The other thing that I would be strict on is the concept of a drop zone. So, oftentimes we can drop the mail, we can drop papers on our desk, but that can be a little bit of a dangerous slippery slope. Instead, I would encourage you to not have a drop zone, so that things go into their specific place because the drop zone is that collection of clutter can actually be quite stressful for people.

Then the other thing I would say here is to, this is just a fun bonus one is to think about what makes you happy in your space as well. I think we underestimate what the surrounding environment can actually do to our mental state. So, having – behind me, I've got some seasonal candles. I've got some flowers. I've got some colors that make me happy. Some of those little things can actually go a long way in just creating a space that makes you feel restful, peaceful at ease, and happy at the end of the day. Those are some of my tips for, as you're thinking about organizing your space, some tips that can help you.

[MESSAGE]

[0:11:01] SO: I'm Sarah Ohanesian, Founder of SO Productive, a productivity, training and consulting company. Teams I work with get more done. They experience improved processes, greater productivity, and increased efficiency, all without stress and burnout. If you want to improve your performance, or the performance of your team, visit so-productive.com and get started today. I offer conference keynote, one-on-one coaching, and hands-on corporate workshops, all focused on increasing productivity and time management. Let's discuss how SO Productive can supercharge your organization. Links are in the show notes.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:11:45] DC: Every year around the Christmas holidays, I give myself a decluttering assignment. Well, for the last three years. For the first year, I tackled what I call my closet of shame. It's still my closet of shame, but it's organized. It's all the boxes I just keep hand with me. My high school yearbook is one of them, you know, like things like that. My closet of shame is still closet of shame, but it's organized. I know what shelves things are on now. This is not something that takes a day. This is like a massive project because once you have boxes and you're looking in them you could get lost in there.

Almost, like I wish that I just had a guy who could come do it because they would just be like, "What is all this? Throw it out." They would just be gone, instead of like looking through each box. Last year, I tackled my clothes closets. By the way, I didn't even realize I had as many winter clothes as I did, because they were strewn all over the place. I found some in suitcases. I mean, it was insane, but if I can tell you that and it took me a week because I can't freak myself

out about it. I just have to do it when I do it and I put music on or listen to some podcasts and I don't give myself any pressure, because it's not something I want to do, but I know it's something I have to do.

If I can tell you that still to this day, this morning, when I opened up that closet door to grab a shirt, everything is still neat and organized. I'm still amazed that it is and it makes me feel so happy. I used to open that door and be like, "God, how can even live like this?" Because I needed that organization that I could follow it after. This year, I already know my project, because I make sure I have a project. This year I'm tackling my office and it is everything from getting the wires under control.

I have a pile of wires that just cross over each other. I mean, it's like those Christmas tree lights in here. There's no reason that it can't be neat and organized except that I have to turn off the computers and unplug everything. Even just saying it starts stressing me out because sometimes decluttering is – once you start, you can't stop. You've got to commit to it. Otherwise, you could end up in a worse situation. When I was doing my closet, I would specifically take everything out of the closet and put it on my bed, because then I knew I had to deal with it.

If I just took one thing at a time out of my closet, then I would be giving myself permission to not do anything about it. I am a true believer, though, I actually am a little bit of a believer in the stations, but that's only because I need to – how I do it is, this 1000%, I don't need anymore. Goodbye. This I might maybe let me re-examine it later. This 1000% is staying. Before I put it somewhere permanently, I move it into station.

I don't know if I'm going to get in trouble from that for you, but I'm really excited about talking about this now because I'm looking around my desk and listening to everything you're saying. I'm like, "Oh, yeah. There's this stuff I grab all the time. There's four old laptops. What do you suggest I do with those?" I'm saying, like I don't even know what to do with those. Anything else on that?

[0:15:29] SO: Well, one, I think you're doing great with this. You've got the plan. The other thing I love about what you said is that you've got time to do it like you are dedicating time to do it. This goes back to a lot of the themes you hear in this podcast often. If it's important, you've got

to put time on your calendar to make it happen. The same goes for organizing your space. You're never going to have time to do it. You have to make time to do it. I actually think around the holidays is a good time to do it. You might be doing some seasonal decorating where boxes are coming in and out, naturally, anyways, you may be changing out clothing because it's getting chilly or where you live.

When these moments happen, these shift in seasons, I actually think it's a great time to put a block of time in your calendar to do this. Also, the block of time is important. This might not be something you can do quickly during your lunch break. This might be something you really want to take a Saturday afternoon and actually really tackle this particular item. I would say, one closet, one space at a time, and doing it to completion. Getting everything out. I actually love that tip. I've heard that before. It's like, put it on the bed so that you are committed to, you got to go to sleep in your bed that night, to be fair, making sure that you get all those items back where they need to go. I love that.

[0:16:40] DC: The last thing I want to say about this is that I understand that I have a luxury of time when it comes to this, but it is the one thing I make sure I block off time and do, because I do not want to start the next year knowing that I didn't declutter this year it's my office, but I want to say something about the tackling it all at once. If you're not in a situation like that and in the first year when I was tackling my closet of shame, there was a lot of boxes to go through and there was just no way it was going to happen in one sitting. What I did was say to myself, one box a day, you must go in.

Again, eating the elephant one bite at a time versus the whole thing. Then that cleaned box, that things that I didn't want to go back in the closet, things I was ready to let go of now, stayed out of the closet until all the boxes, I could condense them, reorganize them, and then they went back in. That one happened over like a span of two weeks, but it was forcing. I mean, forcing myself to do one box a day and just saying to myself, "Come on, you can do one box. You can do it. No one's asking you to do all the boxes." But I'm just saying that because it was still overwhelming opening up that closet door.

My first thought was close it and just make it go away. I stayed with it and it's still – it's crazy, but cleaning those closets are some of my proudest accomplishments because it was just

something that's not in my nature. I work really well when someone says to me, "Your keys go here, the mail goes here, your glass goes here." I'm like, "Okay, no problem. I will follow that. I will follow that. Thank you. Thank you for letting me know and have to think about it." Okay, let's move to the next tip that you have for everybody.

[0:18:43] SO: Yeah. The key thing here that I want to touch on is permission to get rid of some of those things. You mentioned that earlier. I think that that's really, really critical because sometimes we're holding on to items that we think we might need one day. I just want to give people permission, like be honest with yourself. If you haven't used that thing in a year or two, it's probably safe to get rid of it. I think that that's a really helpful thing to wrap up with. You've got that permission to do that.

[MESSAGE]

[0:19:11] DC: Like what you hear? Leave us a comment. Click a few stars, share this episode and please subscribe to the show. Are you interested in being a guest and sharing your information with our active and growing global audience? Podcasts are trending as a potent direct marketing and educational channel for brands and businesses who want to provide portable content for customers and consumers. Visit printmediacentr.com, click on podcast, and request a partner package today. Share long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:19:45] DC: Sarah, I know we are almost at time, and we're being mindful of people's time, but let's just get back to this file thing for one second, because I do spend a crap load of time looking for files on my computer. I'm not even part of an organization, which has a server that many people are naming things and sticking them in places. Last, any tips on that?

[0:20:08] SO: Yeah. This one might not be too popular, but I would say this is an area to be pretty strict with yourself, with your team, and with your coworkers. Certainly, if you're on a team, one way I would tackle this is to actually have a formalized meeting about this and likely this is a good thing to do annually, but think about how are we going to organize our files and certainly, like on the server, on this shared space. You can do this by work category, client,

department, year, job type in the printing industry certainly, but the key is that I often see clients starting over.

They've got a new system, a new naming convention, really strict on this one. Stick to the plan, like come up with a plan as a group and stick to it and hold each other accountable to how we're going to name these files going forward. If you work for yourself or by yourself, again, being strict with yourself that you're sticking to, I'm always naming the files the same way, that is going to save you hours and hours of time over the course of the year.

[0:21:03] DC: I mean, where were you 10 freaking years ago? What am I supposed to do now? I mean that, like how do you start? You just start by saying, "Okay, as of now, this is the way it's going to happen?"

[0:21:14] SO: Exactly. Yeah. Starting now. Then if we can retro great, but really sticking to it. Again, January 1, it's a great time to do this. Let's start over in the new year.

[0:21:23] DC: Okay, I'm putting this on my accountability list, because this is a big problem for me. Just yesterday, I was searching for a file and it was ridiculous. By the way, I could have recreated it in the time that it took me to find the file that I was trying to find to avoid having to recreate it. I am squarely in that in the midst of that particular problem that you highlighted. I appreciate that. Now, I'm telling you that we're going to be reporting back on that. I'm still using my Todoist. This will end up being a huge time saver for me for sure. Thank you so much for that. All the tips you give to everybody.

Just very quickly, you and Kim are doing a leadership workshop for women in business. It starts on December 8th, but it's ongoing every quarter and there are monthly meetings. Can you just quickly tell everybody all the women out there about that? I will put a link to where you can find out more information in the show notes.

[0:22:29] SO: Absolutely. Kim is an executive coach. She helps us with everything we need to be leaders, women leadership roles in the business world. Kim's going to be really on this December session focused on networking. Wonderful time to get back in with networking in the

December month. Then I come in and help you to figure out, well, how are we actually going to fit that into our busy schedule?

Kim's got that tangible leadership piece and I've got that time management piece. So, quarterly, we're going to be doing sessions on that. Then monthly, we're calling it our tribe meeting. This is where you can come and actually learn from the group. These are monthly group coaching sessions, where you can implement what you're learning, try it out, ask for feedback, and get in the moment coaching from Kim and I in a group setting. Really fantastic. Thank you, Deborah.

[0:23:13] DC: Excellent. No. Well, thank you for helping people out there. Thank you for your time management tips and thank you to everybody for your time and attention on this podcast. Until next time, time management long and prosper.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:23:29] DC: Thanks for listening to Podcasts From the Printerverse. Please subscribe, click some stars, and leave us a review. Connect with us through printmediacentr.com. We'd love to hear your feedback on our shows and topics that are of interest for future broadcasts. Until next time, thanks for joining us. Print long and prosper.

[END]

Mentioned in This Episode:

Leadership Workshop for Women in Business:

Sarah Ohanesian on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sarahohanesian/>

SO Productive: <https://www.so-productive.com/>

Todoist: <https://todoist.com/>

Asana: <https://asana.grsm.io/sarahohanesian308>

Command the Chaos Course: <https://www.so-productive.com/productivity-course/>

Deborah Corn on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/deborahcorn/>

Print Media Centr: <https://printmediacentr.com>

Project Peacock: <https://ProjectPeacock.TV>

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Girls Who Print: <https://girlswhoprint.net>