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**Things You Can Do
Immediately to**

**Declutter Your
Digital Life**

**Without Completely
Disconnecting**



PAM IVEY

Introduction

We need to be online, so we're connected with our industry news and social contacts. Yet being online seems to diminish our attention spans and take over our private lives. It's a common Catch-22 problem that needs to be addressed lest our brains become one with our computers (isn't this the plot of a sci-fi movie already?)

You can approach this digital decluttering in a few different ways. To begin slowly, take a few of these tips below and start to implement them into your daily life. Or start with one tip then move on to another one when you feel the first is complete. Or you can take the "cold turkey" approach and unplug from everything social (with the exception of work) and then add those elements that you truly enjoy back into your life, such as social media or favourite apps.

No matter your approach, take time to evaluate just how distracted you are with your digital clutter and analyze how you can regain some of your free time by eliminating extra work.

DIGITAL DECLUTTERING TIPS

Embrace time blocking strategies.

Set aside blocks of time for checking emails, social media, and working with clients. You'll be more productive when focused on just one task at a time.

Turn off notifications.

Those chimes are nothing more than distractions that are pulling you away from your work or your family and friends. Whatever is causing the distraction will still be there; just deal with it in your own time frame.

Limit your social profiles.

Do you REALLY need to be on every platform available? Cut out those that you rarely use. Identify which ones you use for personal fun and those you use for business. Eliminate those that have a high learning curve or that your audience rarely uses.

Deep clean your list of followers on social media.

Do you know these "friends" in real life? Are they business associates? Have you ever interacted with them online? Be smart with your social followings and unfriend anyone you don't know. If you're willing to form a relationship with these people, keep them and start engaging for a set period of time. Without the engagement, you're basically sharing information (some of it personal) with a bunch of strangers.

Decide what type of news you want in your social media feeds.

Negative news, political rants, or news that goes against your core beliefs distract and affect your mood. You are incomplete control of who you allow on your feed so exercise your right to unfollow or unfriend those who add too much negativity.

Declutter your email.

Gmail makes life easier with their tabs and their labels system, but you still need to implement processes to keep that inbox manageable. Consider hiring a VA to manage that task for you. Set up filters to send certain types of messages straight into folders and remember to check those folders daily.

Implement a “touch it or trash it” system for your email.

Look at your emails and then decide if you need to: take action, save it, or trash it. No clicking out of the message and letting it sit in your inbox indefinitely. Take an action right there by answering the email, putting it in a digital folder, or deleting it.

Clear out the photos from your phone on a weekly or monthly basis.

How many people do you know who have lost precious photos when they dropped or lost their phones? Backup those photos to the cloud automatically on a regular schedule. Not only will those memories be saved but you'll also free up enormous amounts of space on your phone.

Unplug for the weekend.

Your business will survive, and your body will thank you for the decrease in stimuli. Go one step further and unplug every evening so you can focus on your family, relax with a new hobby, or simply learn how to decompress and enjoy the quiet.

Create a social media calendar.

Staring at a blank screen with no idea what to post wastes just as much time as scrolling while thinking of what to post. With an editorial calendar filled out, you know exactly what you'll post and when. Better yet, delegate this task to your VA so all you have to do is respond to questions or comments after the post is published.

Avoid using electronics before bedtime.

Your brain needs time to slow down and decompress, especially after a stressful day. Even on regular days your brain is overloaded with the constant stimuli from your computer and your phone; plus, the blue light rays can affect your sleep patterns, making you feel tired in the morning instead of well-rested. Shut them off at least one hour before bed. Read a book, meditate, or listen to calming music instead.

Declutter your hard drive.

Do you really need those marketing reports from 8 years ago? Chances are high that the information is out of date, so delete those old files. A cluttered hard drive also impedes your productivity, often because you can't find files quickly. Implement a filing system for your digital files so you can find necessary files quickly and easily without wasting precious time.

Learn to delegate tasks to a team member or virtual assistant.

How is your time best spent? Organizing your files or creating products to sell to your target market? Learning to delegate can be challenging, especially if you're used to being the sole worker in your business; but it's a valuable step so you can keep the backend of your business organized while still producing products and programs your audience wants.

Replace digital activities with real life activities.

Try cutting down your social media time at night to restart an old hobby. Or socialize with friends or family on the weekends. Turn the laptop off 30 minutes early to go for a walk. You'll soon start to remember how much pleasure these real-life activities provide and just how much time is wasted on those digital distractions.

Opt for live conversation versus texting.

A common complaint about teens and the obsession with their phones is that they don't know how to have a real live conversation. Only when you're face-to-face can you make eye contact or hear the inflection in someone's voice. These subtle nuances are lost on texting apps. While texting is convenient late at night, continue that conversation the next day via phone or video chat.

Clear out the icons on your desktop screen.

Not only do all the extra "shortcuts" slow your computer's start up capabilities, it will immediately bombard your brain with extraneous images, most of which serve little purpose. Sweep all those icons into a folder to sort through at a later date. Whatever program shortcuts you eliminate, be sure to physically delete that program from your control panel. Now you can start your workday more calmly.

Set a limit on the number of browser tabs you open.

Just because your computer CAN open 25 tabs at once doesn't mean it should! You'll likely find your computer working more slowly or even crashing from the strain of having so many browser windows open. Limit yourself to 4-5 tabs to limit distractions and then close them up when your task is complete. If you're afraid of forgetting the URLs for closed tabs, bookmark them in your browser or save them in a notepad file for later use.

Utilize cloud storage.

Files, photos, or collaborative projects are safer in a cloud storage system than on your hard drive. Dropbox and Google use state-of-the art security technology to keep their platforms safe, much safer than your own hard drive. Plus, you'll prolong the life of your computer and cloud storage makes collaboration a breeze.

Forward multiple email addresses into one inbox.

Instead of checking a business email plus your personal email, forward one of those addresses to the other so you're only checking one physical location each day. You can still sort and archive these messages and Gmail allows you to respond automatically with the email address used on the original message, so no worries about responding to a business email with your personal email address.

Utilize a password manager for your computer and your phone.

With the onslaught of identity theft and cybersecurity threats, creating unique passwords is even more important these days. However, keeping these passwords safely stored is another problem. Enter the password manager. LastPass has a computer and mobile app for linking your accounts so you can have computer and mobile access wherever you go. No more sticky notes or memos on your phone with all your important information listed for anyone to see.

Discard any stray electrical cords.

Pile all the cords you own together. Can you find their electronic counterparts? Whatever cords you can't identify, discard them. When you match the right cords to the correct electronic device, label the cord with duct tape along with the name of the device so you won't waste time searching for its match. Believe it or not, physical clutter greatly impacts your productivity so keep it at a minimum.

Backup your data regularly.

Even if this sounds counterintuitive to decluttering, keeping a backup of your important information can be a life saver in case of a breach or other emergency. Create a backup before you start deleting information off your computer or phone. Store this backup in the cloud and perform these backups regularly once your digital decluttering is complete.

Re-learn how to be alone.

Do you know what to do with yourself if you don't have your phone or laptop turned on? Place your electronics in another room and keep the door closed for 30 minutes to start. Some people find they get twitchy and anxious without their electronics, not knowing where to devote their attention. In this case, learn how to redirect your attention to something non-electronic. Pick up a book; listen to your favourite music; close your eyes and think about your next vacation. Being alone is a good thing.

Live an intentional lifestyle.

When you live with intention, you choose to embrace things that bring you joy, excitement, and happiness. Intention also brings with it focus and attention to the task at hand. Does scrolling through your social media at night while "watching" a show bring you happiness or contentment? Are you benefitting from these distractions? Or do you want to try choosing a quiet meditation, journaling, or simply reading a book instead?

Eliminate any subscriptions you don't use or find value in anymore.

Search through your PayPal account for business-type subscriptions. Some subscriptions you can't do without—like your web hosting—but no doubt you'll find others to membership groups that you've forgotten about or simply don't participate in any longer. Just hit that cancel button, with no regrets. If you forgot about a subscription, then it holds no value.

In Conclusion

Take your time going through these steps. There's no right or wrong way to approach this list; if necessary, close your eyes and point to the tip you want to complete first. Completing these steps sooner than later is better, only because digital clutter will impact your productivity, but don't feel like you have to complete one task each day.

Once you've made a dent in these digital tips, convert them to your physical life and start decluttering. Do you have a system for dealing with junk mail or coupons? Are your photos organized in one place? Do you delegate tasks to your family members or outsource to a cleaning service or meal planning service? Document your progress in a journal or with a close friend. Soon you'll be organized, and you'll feel the energy in your home change from frenetic to calm.