# Stop Searching, Start Finding: The Impact of Clutter on Your Business

By Bob Krantz, CEO of Mindseye

everal weeks ago, I was in my basement trying to find my daughter's soccer cleats in a rush to get to practice. I had an idea of where they were, but the more time that went by, the more frustrated I became with each toy, box, bag, etc. that I had to move in my search.

After what felt like hours, I stepped out of the basement, took a deep breath, and started over. The cleats were right in front of me the whole time. The clutter in my basement and the frustration of not finding what I needed was distracting me from my objective.

Researchers from the Princeton University Neuroscience Institute performed a study about the impact of clutter on the brain, which <u>Erin Doland thankfully summarized</u> for us non-neuroscientists:

When your environment is cluttered, the chaos restricts your ability to focus. The clutter also limits your brain's ability to process information. Clutter makes you distracted and unable to process information as well as you do in an uncluttered, organized, and serene environment.

In the digital era, we are in a world of chaos. Think of how many distractions you encounter throughout your day in emails, updates, instant messages, and your news feed. Not only do these things interrupt your day, but they also — because they are digital — tend to accumulate over time. The impact is far more distracting when you're trying to find something.

I bring up the story of my basement because the steps to de-clutter and make things more findable can be applied to your data as well.

#### Take Inventory

If you're a parent, you too probably have basement bins filled with toys just to keep things off the floor. Some of the toys are in the regular rotation, some are buried at the bottom because they are out of season, and others are likely lying untouched because they've been outgrown.

To know for sure, you can sort the toys into piles, looking at age appropriateness, wear-and-tear, time of year, or other logical groupings that make sense for your kids. It won't be long before you have created some sense of order from among the chaos.

When you think about it, your email inbox isn't a whole lot different than your basement. There's a ton of information coming into one place.

The first step in prioritizing what you need is gaining an understanding of what you have. Some of it has business significance, but it's not relevant to the matter at hand—things like newsletters, Google alerts, and social media updates. Employing mailbox management tools can help you divide your email into "piles" to help determine what has value and what is clutter.

#### **Evaluate the Buckets**

At the turn of each season, expert home organizers seem to magically appear all over the media with tips to de-clutter your life. Turns out, they've got some sage advice.

For toys, the keep-donate-trash method is nearly fail-safe. By breaking each larger pile into smaller ones, you

establish what's important and what's just taking up valuable space.

The same can be said for email. A recent Information Age article, "Five Essential Tips for Mastering Your Inbox," notes that employees spend a whopping 27 days each year on average managing their emails, making inbox processing the most time-consuming office activity outside of a job's actual tasks.

But implementing a loose translation of keep-donate-trash can help them gain control. By breaking incoming messages into response required, read required, unimportant, and outdated—and following through on actions needed—you're determining what's important and what is a distraction.

### Explain the Importance of What You Keep

When you decide what you need to keep, make sure you capture the reason why it is important. Over time, a need for it, such as legal action and discovery, may arise or priorities may change.

Since information naturally ages, you also may need to re-evaluate the kept items at some point to determine if they too have become clutter.

In your basement, you would label the bins in a way that allows you to see them, understand their contents, and get at what you need. They also provide logical places to store similar items going forward and control the clutter.

Labels can allow the enterprise to organize user data into a more universal structure that's useful to the business and for defining value.

Once you have removed the excess from your surroundings, you can be ready to focus without distraction.

Targeting the things you need to know and moving the things you don't out of the way enables you to identify useful information quicker, progress case strategy and objectives more effectively, and ultimately be more efficient.

## MINDSEYE SUPPORTS EFFECTIVE AND REUSABLE CLASSIFICATION

The Mindseye platform is a powerful and comprehensive eDiscovery solution that can help you classify and categorize information and enable you to:

- Quickly cull junk data and uncover relevant information through a sophisticated, iterative keyword search
- Inform future cases by reusing/ repurposing workflows and historical data
- Integrate your eDiscovery process with your information governance strategy
- Use built-in analytics to refine and improve your information governance strategy and develop data classifications

For more information about the Mindseye platform or to request a demo, please visit www.mindseyesolutions.com.



Bob is an innovative problem solver and, as CEO of Mindseye, is responsible for the vision and leadership of the company. Over the past 12 years, he has played a key role in helping organizations address their growing concerns related to information. Bob has experience in all aspects of information discovery and, serving in both sales and consulting roles, he has assisted companies in cases ranging from bet-the-company antitrust litigation and SEC investigations to internal and employment suits. He provides clients with innovative ways of establishing workflows, maximizing technology investments, and minimizing data volume by focusing on finding the key information that drives decisions that matter. In 2008, Bob co-founded Mindseye with two colleagues to create a technology company that provides companies with solutions to address growing data volumes by connecting the people who have knowledge with the information needed to make effective decisions. Under Bob's leadership, Mindseye has seen steady growth and is poised to change how companies view and manage their information. Contact Bob at <a href="mailto:bkrantz@mindseyesolutions.com">bkrantz@mindseyesolutions.com</a> or (888) 770-3876.



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