

## **Spring cleaning your career: 8 bad work habits to drop**

Spring cleaning doesn't just apply to your closet. Here are 8 habits and thoughts you should drop to be more successful in work this March 21st.

**By:** Laura Kane Staff Reporter, Published on Wed Mar 20 2013

Spring cleaning doesn't only apply to your closet. Everyone has thoughts and behaviours that are cluttering up their work schedules and cramping their career development. This spring, throw out these 8 bad habits.

### **Stop telling yourself the same old story.**

When people have setbacks at work, they often repeat basic negative statements about themselves, such as, "I'm not smart enough," or "I'll never be more organized," says Mark Franklin, practice leader and president of [CareerCycles](#).

Research has shown that positive thinkers are more successful. Try telling yourself a new story, like, "My creativity will bring me success," or "I will stand out when I seek challenging projects." As Franklin says, "you are your ever-improving story."

### **Stop believing that your past as shown in your resume defines your future.**

People put too much stock into job titles and descriptions as they appear on their resumes, LinkedIn or Workopolis postings, says Franklin. "It narrows your scope of possibilities. Sometimes, people get good at something that they no longer like to do."

He suggests writing a career statement, which has two parts. First, list your interests and desires. Second, list your strengths and skills – but only the ones you still enjoy using. Finally, look for transferable skills that will convince your current or prospective employer you can do something new.

### **Stop ducking opportunities to shine.**

Everybody has excuses for turning down new opportunities. You're too busy. You're not qualified. They're not paying you enough. But you might just be afraid to step outside your comfort zone, said Franklin.

"The downside of saying no is that you lose a chance to step into your 'learning zone,'" he says. If you want to learn new skills, expand your presence at work or be challenged, try saying "yes" next time.

### **Stop listening to your co-workers complain.**

You don't necessarily need to excuse yourself physically the next time a co-worker has a gripe with the boss, but don't encourage it either. Don't start email conversations or go to lunch with negative colleagues who want to complain, suggests Franklin.

"It happens in offices across the city and around the country," he says. "Someone is going to be more upset than you about something that happened... It has the potential to drag you down and put you in a less positive mindset."

### **Stop living inside your email inbox and smartphone.**

It's getting harder for many employees to resist the siren song of a flashing BlackBerry or Outlook notification, but ignoring temptation could help you become more productive, says corporate trainer [Susan Gregory](#).

"A lot of the time it's not life and death," she said. Every job will be different, but she generally advises setting up rules to prioritize emails and turning off notifications if possible. Checking once every half hour or hour is more than enough for most jobs, she says.

### **Stop using other people as the benchmark for how you should work.**

Competition in the workplace is a fact of life, but you might get ahead faster if you focus on your own tasks, goals and strengths instead of the person next to you, says Deanne Kelleher, owner of professional organizing company [Kaos Group](#).

By that same token, try not to criticize or judge the way that others work. "We could all stand to have a kinder understanding of others' work styles, and a kindness towards ourselves," she says.

### **Stop calling it a "to-do" list.**

No, you can't throw out the "to-do" list, but you can change the way you think about it. Try changing it to a "want-to" or "love-to" list, recommends Shirin Khamisa, career counsellor and founder of [Careers By Design](#).

"Changing the way you talk to yourself about work is powerful," she says. "'I have to' replaced by 'I want to' or 'I choose to' changes your happiness level." Rather than feeling resigned to work, remind yourself that you choose to work to survive or to contribute to society.

### **Stop trying to fix your weaknesses.**

Develop your strengths instead, says Khamisa. "When we look at things through a lens of strength, as opposed to weakness, we can leverage those strengths to work on things that are outside our comfort zone."

For example, if you have a presentation that frightens you because you think you're a poor public speaker, take a moment to remind

yourself of the strengths you can use instead, like your passion for the project or your interpersonal skills. The negative thoughts are likely to disappear.