

BUSINESS

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COMMENTARY

It's time for spring cleaning

PITTSFIELD — It's finally spring. The flowers are beginning to blossom. Baseball is back. Soon, we'll be able to open the windows and let the fresh air in. As winter's cold melts away, many people are motivated to clean and organize as the weather gets warmer.



Heather Boulger
Inside the Job Market

Spring cleaning at work accomplishes many of the same things that it does in our homes. It makes us more organized, it reduces stress and clutter, and it streamlines processes, which makes us more productive. A recent study indicates that for every hour that a person spends cleaning, their overall happiness increases by 53 percent. Who doesn't want more happiness in their life!

Here are a few tips to help you "spring clean" your business and your career.

- Clean up your inbox: Many people complain about the sheer volume

of daily email they receive and the struggle to keep up with it. From hard drives filled with photos, documents and spreadsheets to email apps, digital clutter not only makes us less productive, but it also distracts us throughout the day. Review your technology devices and delete or archive files that are no longer necessary. Unsubscribe from newsletters and blogs that distract you and waste time. Create folders and categorize projects to help you organize.

- Dust off and streamline processes: Review the processes that happen in your organization and determine if they could be completed in a more efficient manner. Review laws, regulations, employment records, and job descriptions to make sure you are prepared and current.
- Talk to your team: Ask your team for advice on streamlining operations

and improving productivity and engagement. You may not be able to act on or change everything your team has issues with, but you will likely find some good ideas and advice. Your team members will appreciate the open dialogue.

- Clean your office: Yes, physically clean it. Make sure it is clean and inviting on the inside and the outside. If you don't have the time to clean, hire a crew. A clean place of business isn't just good for sales and employee morale, it's good for your health, too. Research now points to clutter as a source of stress. Dust, mold and debris can aggravate allergies, asthma and infections.

So, you've cleaned out your closet and donated those old clothes, moved the furniture and found \$5 of change in the cushions, and dusted every bunny with a vengeance. But there is still time to dust off that resume and polish up your career plan. Here are a few ideas

Boulger

FROM PAGE 1

that may inspire you to rejuvenate your job search.

- Preparation goes a long way: Cleaning is easier when you do monthly maintenance work. Don't wait until you start to look for a job. Sometimes you may not have time to freshen up your resume before a job opportunity comes knocking, so look over your resume regularly to keep it fresh and current. Stay up to date with online job sites, career blogs and your social media accounts. Research classes, workshops and job clubs to help you stay in the job game.

- Polish your networks: Some experts say that 70 percent of people end up in their current position thanks to networking. Don't let your networks get stale. Take a tip from Tory Johnson of "Good Morning America" and keep a 5-by-5 list. "Contact 5 people by 5 p.m. every day, including new connections or follow-up conversations, who can help you achieve your goals," Johnson says.

Give your contacts a call, email them, or send via messages via social media to

see if they've heard of any job opportunities. Consider expanding your contacts by using staffing firms or the business networking site LinkedIn to help your network bloom.

- Spruce up your interview strategies: Be prepared and sell yourself as an employee and as a solution. Do research on the company and the position you are applying for and identify some of their major challenges. Show them how you can help them achieve their goals with your skills and motivation. Do a practice session to help you answer top interviewing questions.

Reassessing and reamp-ing your search will help you stay focused and organized without burning yourself out. If you are struggling or just want to freshen your job search, make April the month you connect with a job counselor at the Berkshire-Works Career Center to turn those April showers into new blooming job opportunities. The summer hiring season is coming. You'll want to bring your A game to that search.

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