EASY ORGANIZATION SYSTEM (EOS)

HOW TO ORGANIZE THOUSANDS OF FILES, NOTES AND PHOTOS SO YOU WILL NEVER FORGET WHERE THEY ARE

Discover how the Easy Organization System (EOS) can help you organize digital information, eliminate duplicates, and remember where everything is stored.

ASIANEFFICIENCY

Dear reader,

A few weeks ago, I was working with a new client, Elizabeth, who wanted to be more organized and productive. She was overwhelmed by her to-do list, working 60+ hours a week from home, and staying up late to meet all of her deadlines at work.

When I asked her why she needed help, she said:

"Thanh, I have no life. I'm working all the time and I'm unhappy at work. My corporate job is paying the bills but I would rather be my own boss and have a more flexible schedule. On the side I'm studying to get my real estate license and it requires 180 hours of study time. With where things are at now that would take me over a year to get it done and I don't have the patience for that. I want to have it done in less than a quarter."

"Okay, we can do that. Let's evaluate what our options are."

At Asian Efficiency, we have the TEA Framework which is our productivity methodology. TEA stands for Time, Energy and Attention which form the three pillars of productivity. You can think of them as three currencies and we want to have as many of them possible. The more we do, the more productive we are.

When one of them is low, it significantly lowers your productivity. Most people who are new to Asian Efficiency usually lack Time.

TEA FRAMEWORK DIAGRAM

Elizabeth was no different. She knew what she needed to do (Attention) and she had the motivation to do it (Energy) but she was lacking the time to execute (studying to get her real estate license).

Once we identified which pillar we needed to focus on (Time), it gave us a roadmap to help Elizabeth achieve her goal.

She has tried many different things to free up time. She has read multiple productivity books, tried many productivity tips, and attempted to transform from being a night owl to a morning person.

None of them worked for her.

That's no surprise. Oftentimes making major changes to your lifestyle can be difficult and unsustainable. That's why we recommend that you start with making small changes and do many of them over time. When you can introduce multiple small changes it leads to a major change over time that is sustainable.

THE POWER OF SMALL CHANGES

It's the power of the compound effect. Just like compound interest, small changes added up over time in your life will lead to big results. If you invested $100 today and got 1% interest a day, a year later you would have $100 * 1.01^365 = $3,778. Rounded up, that's a 38x return.

However, if you got $100 and a one-time interest of 365% a year later, that's only $465. That's only a 4.6x return. That's the power of the compound effect.

To give you another example of this, compare grocery stores Trader Joe's and Whole Foods. I don't know about you but whenever I go to Whole Foods for a week's worth of groceries as a single person, I can never leave the store without spending at least $100. I used to shop there for years until I switched to another grocery store.

If I buy the same items at Trader Joe's, my new favorite grocery store, I pay around $45. It boggles my mind every time because I'm used to paying at least $100. I used to think that a $1 savings on avocados wasn't worth it but when you shop for 10-15 items, a $1 or $2 saved here and there adds up.

The same is true for results you want in your life. When you want to become more productive, don't try to make major changes in your life. Opt for the small wins and do many of them over time so you use the compound effect.

So how would you do this at work and in your life?

Let's go back to Elizabeth.

Once I explained to her how the compound effect worked, we worked to find all the ways we could save 5-10 minutes on smaller tasks (we call these Time Squander). When you identify multiple Time Squanders, you can oftentimes free up 1.5 hours a day. That's 7.5 hours a week, 30 hours a month, and 360 hours a year.

What could you do with an extra 360 hours a year?

A lot!

Asian Efficiency was started on the premise of 7.5 hours a week. In 2011, every week I would write a blog post which took me about 5 hours to write, one hour of editing and half an hour of publishing. I did this for a year which led to Asian Efficiency becoming the company it is today with the #1 productivity podcast (over 10 million downloads), 15,000 paying clients, and employment for people all over the world.

And all it started with freeing up multiple 5-10 minute tasks. Don't underestimate the power of freeing up all the Time Squanders!

See this table as an example of what's possible.

Number of 10 Minute Time Squanders	Free Time Per Day	Free Time Per Week (Mon-Fri)	New Possibility In A Week
1	10 minutes	50 minutes	Read 40 pages of a book
2	20 minutes	1 hour and 40 minutes	Get a workout done and shower
3	30 minutes	2 hours and 30 minutes	Study for certification
4	40 minutes	3 hours and 20 minutes	Take your kid out for an afternoon
5	50 minutes	4 hours and 10 minutes	Get two works done
6	1 hour	5 hours	Read a whole book
7	1h and 10 min	5 hours and 50 minutes	Learn and practice a new skill multiple times
8	1h and 20 min	6 hours and 40 minutes	Get three workouts done and have a smoothie every time
9	1h and 30 min	7 hours and 30 minutes	Write and publish a blog post
10	1h and 40 min	8 hours and 20 minutes	Whole day of volunteering
11	1h and 50 min	9 hours and 10 minutes	Take a daytrip somewhere with your partner and kids
12	2 hours	10 hours	Whole Saturday doing whatever you want to do!
13	2h and 10 min	11 hours and 50 minutes	Epic Netflix marathon in bed
14	2h and 20 min	12 hours and 40 minutes	Write multiple chapters of your book
15	2h and 30 min	13 hours and 30 minutes	Anything you want to do and then some!

Let's assume that the average Time Squander is about 10 minutes. On a typical day, you might encounter 6-8 of them. That's a low estimation, most people we've worked with have over 20 a day but we'll use this range to see what's possible.

If you have 6 Time Squanders a day, that's an hour a day of time wasted or five hours a week (assuming you don't work on the weekends which is doubtful for most people nowadays). You could have read a whole book in that time frame. You could easily read over 40 books a year.

What else can you do with five extra hours of time? You could:

- Take your partner and kids somewhere for a fun afternoon

- Set aside a Sunday morning to study for a certification exam to advance your career

- Get multiple workouts done

You can win back five hours of free time by streamlining multiple 10-minute tasks that you deal with every day.

The best part is, it's easy and this estimation is on the low side. We also don't take into account any Time Squanders you have in your personal life - just strictly what's at work. We've seen clients win back more than ten hours a week by eliminating Time Squanders.

You don't have to make major sacrifices or changes to have more free time. It can start with the little things that rob you of your time (and we have many of them throughout the day).

HOW ELIZABETH FREE'D UP 1.5 HOURS A DAY

When Elizabeth understood this concept she suggested that two of the Time Squanders were finding her own meeting notes and email attachments. She often got frustrated trying to find notes and it would take her 5-10 minutes to find them. Considering she's on 5-8 meetings a day this was a big opportunity for her to win back an hour a day.

The same was true for accessing email attachments. At her job, most people send files as email attachments. When she's trying to find the right email and file, she oftentimes has to dig through hundreds of emails, dozens of file variations and digging through all of it to find the right file.

Instead of taking the time to file the email attachments in the right place on the cloud servers of her company, she's usually in a rush for the next meeting and keeps the files in her email inbox. "I could take the time to file it in the right place or go use the bathroom before my next meeting," as she explained to me.

Sometimes the inability to find the right file or document led her to duplicating work. Even though she knew she had created a presentation deck and stored it somewhere, due to frustrations around finding the file she would restart her work and get it done that way. This was another opportunity to win back time.

Since she was dealing with dozens of email attachments a day, we discovered another Time Squander that could free up another hour a day: meeting notes. If we could have her organize her meeting notes and email attachments so she could quickly access them, we would be able to free up around half an hour a day.

At this point, we had identified how we could help Elizabeth free up time, stay on top of her todo list, and eliminate frustrations at work. When you add up all the Time Squanders and opportunities to win back time, it would add up to anywhere from 5-10 hours a week.

How?

We would do this by giving her the organization system we've developed at Asian Efficiency that allows us to organize thousands of files, notes and photos with ease so you can quickly find anything you need.

I walked her through the **Easy Organization System (EOS)** that we've developed at Asian Efficiency. Regardless of which platform or tools you use, it works across all platforms and devices. We have team members on Mac, Windows, Android, iOS, Samsung tablets and iPad that all use EOS to organize files, notes and photos. This allows anyone to put assets in the right places and for others to quickly and easily find anything they ever need.

This has allowed us to be effective and efficient. We estimate that this saves every team member around 1-2 hours a day from getting lost in digital clutter, waiting for responses on where they can find information, and distractions.

The same was true for Elizabeth. After implementing it, here's what she had to say:

"With help of Thanh and his team I've been able to organize all my information in an orderly manner. I used to be a hot mess with digital clutter and stuff everywhere. The disorganization led to an accumulation of thousands of text files, email attachments, and photos that I had no way of finding and referencing. This was frustrating and I've wasted countless hours every week on this. Sometimes because I couldn't find the right file I had to duplicate work which was a huge waste of time. By using EOS that Thanh taught me I've been able to organize every piece of information and be organized. Now anytime I need to reference or find something it only takes me a few seconds whereas in the past I often couldn't find anything (or it might have taken lots of back and forth asking coworkers). I feel so organized now and I know that I can find anything I need going forward. I probably save about 1.5 hours a day now which is huge for me!"
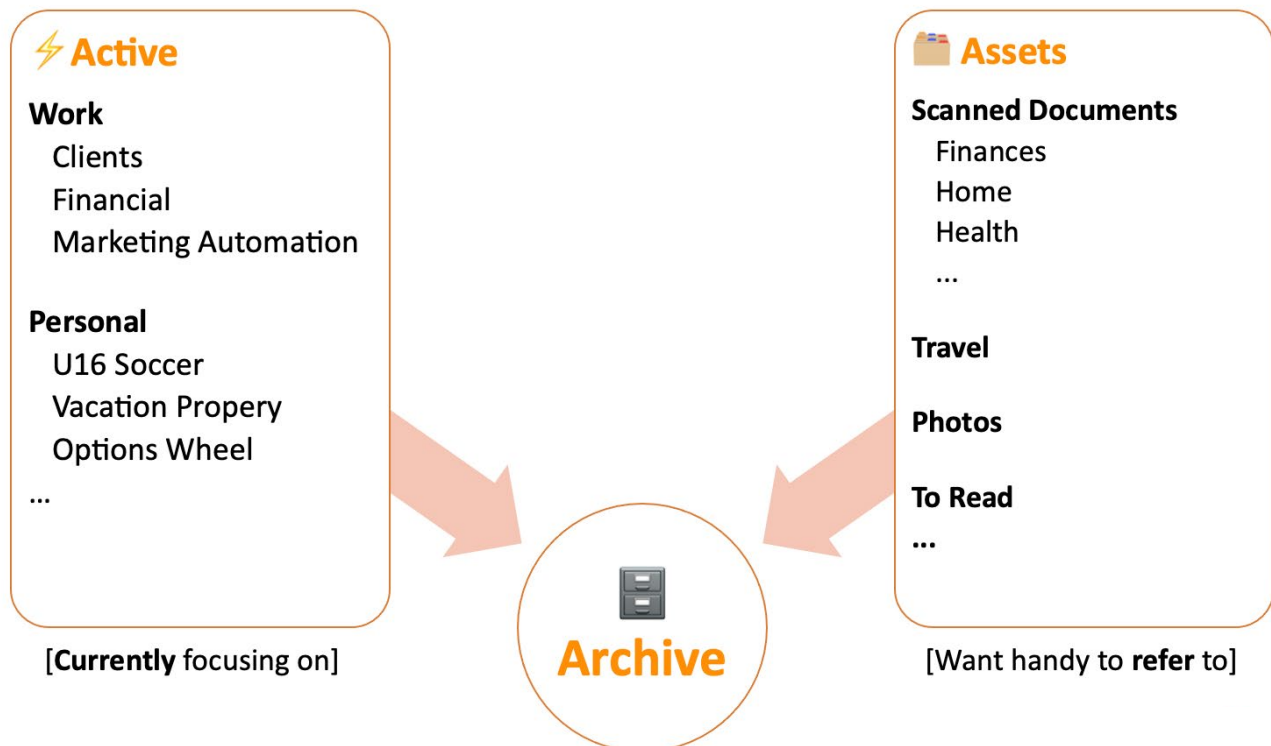

Elizabeth Cook, USA

HOW EOS WORKS

The Easy Organization System is very simple to follow no matter what platform or tool you use (no technical skills required). It works in Dropbox, Photos, Evernote, Notion, Confluence, or (insert any tool you use). The power is that it's platform and tool agnostic so you can apply it anywhere and everywhere.

At its core it comes down to three decisions you make anytime you deal with a file, note or photo. This workflow illustrates it:

The Triple-A Method

⚡ Active

Work
  Clients
  Financial
  Marketing Automation

Personal
  U16 Soccer
  Vacation Propery
  Options Wheel
...

[**Currently** focusing on]

Archive

🗃 Assets

Scanned Documents
  Finances
  Home
  Health
  ...

Travel

Photos

To Read
...

[Want handy to **refer** to]

Any piece of information belongs in one of three buckets:

1. Active - anything that you currently need or reference for a project or goal

2. Asset - ongoing pieces of information you might need

3. Archive - anything you don't need but want to keep stored in case you need to access it in the future (inactive)

This is the AAA Method. Everything you touch will belong in one of three buckets (Active, Asset, Archive). Whether it's a meeting note in Evernote, a screenshot on Windows, or a PDF on your tablet - it will always be filed in one of three ways.

Where people often fail is that they do not have an organization structure in place and then end up with dumping their stuff anywhere (which comes to bite them later when they need to find it). Think of your email inbox that contains all your attachments, your Downloads folder, or photos of an event stored in multiple places (your phone, the cloud). They all become dumping grounds and get out of control.

They become so big that people give up on organizing them and avoid dealing with it. Elizabeth, myself at one point, and many others have done it too.

When you're pressed for time because another meeting is coming up and you have no organization structure, it's easy to let it slide and tell yourself that "you'll deal with it later."

And later never comes and this cycle repeats itself because you'll continue to prioritize what's most important in the moment. Not what's coming ahead.

This can be avoided when you know that everything has a home and you have an organization structure in place. When you know where to put something away, you do it right away and quickly. Just think about when you come home, you drop your keys in the same spot. Anytime you finish brushing your teeth, you put your toothbrush in the same area. Any new incoming mail, you put in an area where you'll get to it and can find it later.

Dealing with email attachments, files, notes, photos, and such is no different.

This is where EOS comes in. One of the core ideas of this system is that everything has a home. It's a matter of 1) creating a structure and 2) know where to place something, quickly. Ideally, it's automatically done for you with help of automation and workflows (something we've developed at AE) so you don't have to think about it. You just have to decide if it's Active, an Asset or Archive. The rest is taken care of.

We have an upcoming webinar where we will show you how to organize your files, notes and photos with the Easy Organization System.

EASY ORGANIZATION SYSTEM

HOW ELIZABETH IMPLEMENTED EOS

At her corporate environment she uses a Windows laptop, stores everything on the company's cloud servers, has photos on her iPhone and Macbook, and has notes in several apps and platforms.

Her backlog of files, notes and photos was in the thousands. She was intimidated by it like anyone would. This is what we tell all our clients: you don't have to do it all at once.

In fact, we recommend that you first implement EOS on new files, notes and photos first. Forget about the backlog for a moment. It will be there and we will deal with it later. The most important thing is to put the foundation in place by having a file structure, naming convention, and a home for everything.

Once it's in place and you're comfortable using it, then you want to tackle the backlog. It's kind of like organizing your kitchen cabinets and drawers. When you move into a new home and start organizing your kitchen, you don't mix utensils with soup bowls. That would be silly.

Every kitchen has its own shape and flow. Your vision of where things should belong is based on how often you reach for something and how accessible it is. There's a vision for it. A specific drawer is used for utensils, a certain cabinet is where you store your plates, and another cabinet is where you store your blender, and so on. Anytime you buy new utensils and plates, you know exactly where to put them. You might even label some of them to make it easy for yourself and guests.

The same is true for your files, notes and photos. We want to create a structure first so everything has a home. Once that is in place and you know how to name everything, then it's easy to add on top of the foundation. That would be the time to tackle the backlog.

We did the same thing for Elizabeth. We kept the backlog for what it was and the first step was to consolidate everything. We moved all her notes to one app (OneNote) and going forward all notes would go in OneNote that's synced up with all of her devices. It also follows an EOS category list so she knows where every note belongs.

We also introduced a folder structure that is based on EOS so anytime she was dealing with a file, document or email attachment it would be filed away in the right place.

Everything had a home and any new incoming piece of information was filtered through the AAA Method:

- Is it part of a project or goal you're currently working on?
  If yes, put it in Active.

- If it's not Active, is it something you might need on an ongoing basis?
  Then put it in the Asset bucket.

- If it's not Active and not an Asset, you put it in the Archive bucket.

For example, Elizabeth was responsible for taking meeting notes on meetings. She started to write them in OneNote. By the end of the meeting, she asked herself:

"Is this Active?"

"Yes, it's part of the company's quarterly goal."

So she put it in the company's Active folder with an appropriate name. It had a home. Anytime she needs to reference it, she knows where to find it.

NOTE: Naming conventions are very important and we spent a lot of time teaching her how to name things so she could easily identify and find them. We will cover this in more detail with templates and examples on our upcoming webinar which you can register for here.

CLICK TO REGISTER

In another example, she got an email with a "save the date" wedding invite graphic taking place next year. She asked herself, "is this Active?"

"No, it's not related to a project or goal."

"Is it something I might need on an ongoing basis? Yes!"

So she filed it away in her Asset folder for her personal life, named it appropriately and referenced it on the calendar event. Since it wasn't related to a project or goal it's part of the Asset bucket. In Elizabeth's case, she stored all of her personal

information on Dropbox so it's synced across her devices (in the past it would be stored locally which isolated it from her devices).

By having EOS in her life she was able to organize everything in her life and quickly access anything. Through eliminating all the Time Squanders, the dozens of little 5-10 minute time wasters throughout the day, she was able to free up on average around 1.5 hours a day.

This allowed her to end her work days earlier and have more time, energy and motivation to study for her real estate license after work.

If you want to see how the Easy Organization System can help you, I invite you to our upcoming webinar where we show you how it works and can save you 1.5 hours a day. You can register for the webinar via this link.

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NEXT ACTIONS

As with everything we do at Asian Efficiency we want to make this simple and actionable for you. If you have a backlog of thousands of files, notes and photos that need to be organized, then we recommend you attend our free training on this topic.

It's coming up soon and here's the link to register for it

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CLICK TO REGISTER

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We'll cover:

- How to get started with the Easy Organization System (even if you have thousands of files, notes and photos in the backlog)

- The AAA Method for organizing your digital information

- The best place to store stuff in the cloud (Dropbox vs iCloud vs Google Drive)

- How to find and deal with duplicate files

- The best apps and tools to use when you need to organize your digital files

And much more. Here's the link again to register for it. Even if you cannot make it live, register for it and we'll send you the recording of it.

-Thanh & the Asian Efficiency team