



TriMetrix®HD Concrete Organization

Concrete Organization:

The ability to understand the immediate, concrete needs of a situation and to establish an effective action plan for meeting those needs.

Why is this skill important?

Quite often, people misinterpret and confuse concrete organization for neatness— but the two aren't the same. There are a lot of people who spend their whole lives being compulsively neat, but never deliver any results. There are other people who have great abilities, but they are limited by their inability to find things.

Concrete organization means putting yourself in a position in which you know where to find things so that you can use them effectively, persuasively, and correctly in performing your job.

People who have good abilities in Concrete Organization will be able to systematically and logically evaluate the components of a situation and then utilize them effectively to produce the desired result. If you have developed your Concrete Organization skills, you will be able to evaluate and allocate human and material resources to effectively accomplish a goal or plan.

In contrast, people who have poorly developed abilities in Concrete Organization may have difficulty in identifying the separate relevant components of a situation. They will be greatly hindered in reaching goals because they will have difficulty deciding what steps to take in order to reach the goals.

Concrete Organization isn't just about "being organized" so that you can find files and paperwork on your desk (although that's essential!). Rather, Concrete Organization is ALSO about WHAT YOU DO with information in a broader sense. How do you (a) find what you need and then (b) use it effectively to perform the required activities?

So, Concrete Organization involves time management, project management, and good analytical thinking skills, as well as the ability to delegate tasks, follow up on progress, and many other skills!

What are skills associated with Concrete Organization?

Someone who has mastered skills associated with Concrete Organization:

- Is able to isolate and initiate action necessary to reach targeted goals.
- Is well organized.
- Possesses the ability to stay focused on following an organized set of activities.
- Organizes and utilizes resources in ways that maximize their effectiveness.
- Ensures plans are initiated, followed, and adjusted as necessary.
- Has the capacity to prioritize and reprioritize as necessary.

How do you develop your own skills and improve Concrete Organization?

- Develop a checklist of essential items that you need for doing your job (e.g., business cards, calendar, brochures, reference letters, price lists, requisition forms, etc.)
- List the component parts or component things that you must have or do in order to do your job correctly (e.g., initiate contact with a customer, submit weekly reports on Mondays, file purchase orders daily, etc.). If you can, break down your job into a listing of at least ten tasks or components that must be completed daily, weekly, monthly, and less often.
- List the components necessary for making you successful—beyond just doing the job correctly. For example, following up with each customer, taking the initiative on a committee, etc.
- DON'T PROCRASTINATE! Procrastination is the art of keeping up with yesterday while putting off tomorrow. Make organization a key part of each day—make time for it and keep yourself organized every day.
- Use ONE good calendar tool—whether it is a paper planner, a handheld “palm” computer, or software on your desktop computer. Use this ONE calendar for all of your activities, both professional and personal. Avoid multiple calendars for every activity you are involved in—that is a prime way of over-scheduling and confusing yourself.
- Keep a SINGLE “to-do” list somewhere that you won’t lose and that you can refer to easily. Categorize things as daily, weekly, or monthly “to-do” items. Use your planner pages, write your action items on a whiteboard in your office, or whatever else works. Update this list daily, or more often if needed.
- Do a time analysis of your days to better understand how you are spending your time, how you are interrupted, and how you are using and abusing available resources.
- Make time for planning, even when time is of the essence. Most likely, the time you spend carefully creating a plan will save you time in completing the project.

- Dedicate time to organizing your filing system. Be careful about what you keep—try to be objective, and throw away or recycle anything irrelevant. For items you do keep, create logical folder titles and store them alphabetically in your file cabinet.
- Keep your desktop as clean as possible—use your desk only for the work you are doing right now. Use file organizers and “in/out” boxes to organize any CURRENT files and paperwork. Maintain these desktop organization tools—once you have finished a project, move documentation about it to a “permanent” file drawer, don’t keep it on your desk.
- Empty your workspace of everything but the project you’re working on to cut down on distractions.
- Make sure that you prioritize projects you are working on so that they match overall company priorities or goals.
- Allocate resources on a priority basis—ask for help from management if you need help in defining priorities.
- Prioritize your daily, weekly, and monthly “to-do” lists. The most urgent items must be your first priority. If someone or something interrupts your progress, assess the new task to determine its level of urgency.
- Remember the 80/20 rule: you can be 80 percent effective by achieving only 20 percent of your goals. But this only applies if you prioritize and accomplish your most critical 20 percent each day.
- Before you even begin acting on a new project, create a timeline for each segment of the project and schedule weekly “to-dos” prior to timeline due dates to avoid a crisis.
- Scheduling as many components early on is the surest way to meet all timelines, and it will help you (and others who are working on the project) stay organized.
- Define deliverables for each project, and communicate them to your project team. Keep the final product in mind as you work

Concrete Organization

Activities

Activity 1: Developing a Time Use Log

Fill out the Time Use Log for every day during one week as directed:

1. Enter the day of the week and the date on the lines indicated
2. Keep tabs of your time in small, 15-minute increments.
3. List all of your activities AS YOU DO THEM. If you perform more than one activity in a 15-minute period, record the most important one.
4. At the end of the day, total each activity and classify it for ease of analysis into the following categories:
 - a. —Planned work
 - b. —Meetings
 - c. —Paperwork
 - d. —Interruptions
 - e. —Traveling
 - f. —Waiting
 - g. —Miscellaneous (coffee breaks, restroom, personal tasks)
5. Total each category and enter it at the bottom of the page beside the corresponding line.
6. To compile your weekly time use log, take the daily total for each category and write it beside the appropriate classification.

Once you have completed a week's worth of Time Use Logs, look carefully at how you are using your time:

1. In which categories are you spending the most time? The least time?
2. Are the categories in which you are spending most time the ones you SHOULD be spending the most time in?
3. What kind of interruptions do you have? How much "miscellaneous" time do you spend?
4. How can you schedule your day better to minimize interruptions and distractions?
5. Can you note any other observations about your Time Use Log?

Activity 2: Taking Action

Develop a plan for an upcoming activity in your department. Identify a project that involves multiple resources and a significant amount of time to accomplish. Then, try to complete the following tasks with that project in mind:

1. Project Name.
2. Set a deadline for completing the plan you are creating.
3. If necessary, establish a budget for the project.
4. Determine how the project fits in with organizational objectives.
5. List up to five specific critical goals related to accomplishing this project.
6. List as many more or less critical goals as you can think of.
7. Prioritize your list of goals based on how important each task is, what tasks are related to others, and/or timelines.
8. For each goal, determine who should participate in reaching the goal and what their deadline is for accomplishing it.

Once you have completed your planning process, confirm the completed plan with your management team to determine if it is accurate and complete.

Activity 3: Project Planning

Think of a recent situation in your workplace in which you let a project slip between the cracks because you were uncertain of how to proceed. Or think of a recent group project that someone else really seemed to take the initiative to organize. Try to answer the following questions:

- A. Why did I let that project slip between the cracks? What action could I have taken to “rescue” it? Who could have helped me?
- B. How did the project organizer get the project moving and keep it on track? Whom did he ask for assistance or direction?

Think of a current project or issue that seems to be stagnating from a lack of direction. Is there a committee that has never met to plan the company holiday party? Is there a proposal due to a client, but no one has started the proposal process? Try to establish the following action list for yourself:

- A. Who are the key players in the project decision-making process?
- B. When can I hold a kick-off meeting to discuss making progress toward the goal?
- C. How can I keep those people actively involved in pursuing the goal?
- D. What resources can I offer to the project?
- E. What resources do I think others need to contribute?

Once you have investigated the issue thoroughly, it will probably become clear what your role can be in pushing the project or problem to resolution. When you have defined roles and responsibilities among project team members, be explicit about expected products and deadlines. Make sure you follow up not only by completing the task or tasks you have assigned to you, but also by calling follow-up meetings and asking other people for updates on their progress.

Activity 4: To Do List

Every day this week, create a carefully thought out “to do” list. Once you have written each task, prioritize each as urgent, less urgent, or not urgent. Re-evaluate your list and add new priorities as they come up.

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