

Stay positive, productive

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Anyone who has ever met me knows I'm insanely close with my cousins, although we all lead incredibly different lives. The youngest just graduated from college, another is a high school Spanish teacher (and NHL dancer, to boot), one proudly earned her MBA and is a stay-at-home mom of three amazing boys, and one, up until this past September, was the owner of a baked goods company that sold the best chocolate chunk cookies you'd ever have tasted. Those cookies moved to the cooling rack when her, well, "bun" James came out of the oven.

This "Cookie Cousin" is whom I'm thinking of as I write this piece, as years ago we coined the phrase "A P&P Day."

P&P?

Easy: Positive & Productive.

As the owner of The Leone Company and a partner in The Best Medical Business Solutions, I've found two things can make or break your day: losing a positive attitude and losing productivity. A client doesn't meet deadline. Payments are late. Meetings take far longer than you'd planned. That unexpected phone call comes in just as you gain momentum. Life happens.

How do you head into each day?

Keep on task without falling victim to the "ding!" You know what I'm talking about. You're in the middle of a task when, upon hearing an inbox chime, you stop what you're doing, read the email and take the time to craft a response. Rinse and repeat enough times and you've lost hours of your day. One of the best tricks someone gave me: stop doing this. Carve out time in the beginning and end of your day for email, with a possible brief slot in the middle, if necessary. But focus on the task at hand, or you risk losing.

Start and end each day with a "To do" List, complete with categories by department or client, and each task having a deadline. HighRiseHQ is one of my favorite task management systems, and, with their mobile app, you can add tasks on the go, whenever you think of them. Avoid the system of keeping items scattered between a notepad, your email system and, my personal favorite, on scrap pieces of paper floating around your desk. Keep deadlines and items to be accomplished in one place so you head into each day knowing what's ahead.

Organization is key. Those paper (or computer) files with names you don't recognize? Take the time to sort through them. Junk drawers? Clean 'em out. Removing the clutter helps you increase productivity and keeps you from needlessly searching through your space.

Stay motivated. Whether it's a fresh bunch of flowers on your desk, an open window, or a playlist you've created just for Monday mornings (or Friday afternoons... or the last 30 minutes

before a deadline), make sure your workspace makes you smile. The positivity is key to thriving.

Of course, find your “Cookie Cousin.” Find that person who wants to see you succeed, who you want to cheer for, who understands what you’re going through and will help cheer you on when one “P” slips. Someone you can laugh with, share fantastic news with, and someone who wants to share fantastic news with you.

It makes your day a whole lot better.

Mara Shorr brings a decade of experience to the table as president of The Leone Company, helping small businesses and non-profits with their marketing, fundraising and community relations strategies. She is also a partner in The Best Medical Business Solutions, a proud committee member of Central Florida’s National Philanthropy Day, a grant panel review member for United Arts of Central Florida and a public speaker.