

Under the Sink and Other Such Important Quests

By Jason Green, Executive Director

Recently, I went on a short lived, but vigorous cleaning rampage. Now, this is not a new experience to my co-workers and I really think they enjoy my spontaneous moods of cleaning. For some reason, they do seem to run when this type of thing occurs. Now that I think about it, I have even found unsigned notes on my desk when I arrive to work stating "Today is NOT a cleaning day!" I'm not a clean nut, mind you, though I have gotten a little bit of a reputation from staff; mine is just an appreciation for order and a little cleanliness. Some are better able to recognize when something wears out or is of no service anymore. This is not to say I work in a messy place, it's just that one person's treasures and stores are another person's junk... or something like that and it is easy to place something out of sight (out of mind) and forget it.

One year for Christmas (I am sure it was a prank!?), I received a gift packet of bathroom cleaning supplies from a recently hired and spunky employee. I believe she may have gotten the idea that I want things just so from my ranting about wiping the toilet seat off or placing the seat down (where it goes) or replacing paper towels when you use the last one. One thing I have noticed and will share with those of you who have dear co-workers that may also enjoy your antics; let's say you come into work and find treasures to clean. You begin on a couple weighty file cabinets that you are sure contain nothing good and any right-thinking person, if they had stashed something valuable in there, would have moved it to a safer location instead of leaving it with other "outdated, 11-year old" accumulated files and reams of paper. So you have spied out the cabinet, you prepare with work clothes on, garbage can or sturdy empty box and in your mind you see a freshly (the goal) cleaned and liberated file cabinet ready for new and important files. Great! Now today is Monday, a good thing to do on a Monday, here is the key to those not so versed yet.... My suggestion: take Tuesday off for peat's sake. When your unsuspecting co-worker comes to look for the master certification exam practice test and manual.... it is a good thing to have vacated the building!

When one becomes efficient at such cleaning antics, they begin to get a little bit of a reputation. This must be because co-workers share in the glory and talk about what a "good job" you did yesterday! Additionally, that work you did Monday and as your reputation grows, can be useful at a later date. See, how I figure... other co-workers use this "cleaning thing" to threaten staff of your wanderings through files, and logically, you will have more file space and you won't have to touch a thing! Now I haven't been able to dial it all in with how the whole thing works but it sure helps create communication amongst the troops.

Let's see, where were we....yes, recently on one of these cleanings, as few as they are, I happened upon a cupboard under the sink. I was simply looking for the large liquid soap bottle to refill the bathroom soap container. Goodness, there must have been half the store in that 24" tall by 24" deep by 30" wide cupboard! (Yes, I measured!) I must have made some noise because I heard a 'Russell' and doors closing, but kept right at it. Before long I found the following in that heavily laden cabinet: 1 Nalgene bottle, 1 empty coffee can, assorted vacuum bags and belts, 2 large boxes of garbage bags, 1 bottle of CLR, 1 can of Comet cleaner, 3 flower vases, 1 fuzzy duster, 1 window squeegee, 1 2-gallon bucket and assorted sponges, package of handy wide Murphy Oil Soap cloths, 1 box of Dust Ease wipes, 3 old candles, 1 box of Q-Tips, 1 bottle of rubbing alcohol, 3 different kinds of furniture spray polish, 1 gallon of Clorox bleach, ½ gallon of Ammonia, 1 quart of Napa motor oil (aha, I thought, gold mine... I may have saved the building!), 2 gallons of Round-up (ooh, saved some money in an OSHA fine too!), 1 bottle of Windex, 46 ounces of baking soda-carpet fresh, ½ gallon of Soft Soap (there it is!), 1 bottle of Ammonia Step Saver floor polish (we have carpet mind you!), 1 large can of Combat Roach killer, 1 can of Raid insect killer (mental note: why the killer cans...maybe I need to look for trip wires!), 1 container of Anti-Foam Rug Doc, 1 bottle of 409 and 103 small plastic bags (now mind you, these bags are small and placed over individual coffee cups we order by the case to give to our members). Yes, I made it to the back of the cupboard! Now wipe off the plumbing and make sure that the Hot Shot – instant hot water dispenser can breath (it keeps the cupboard nice and toasty), I turned to the

garbage can and quickly, before someone asked “what do you have there?” made it outside.

My cleaning antics were just the thing, a good double short, 8-ounce breve’ coffee and a snack or two...was feeling a bit hungry. Now, to get to my work, what a great day! As I sat down in front of my computer and began checking the many daily emails, my mind began to compare and recall how many times I have needed to reorganize my thoughts, prioritize and regroup. It was a very visual picture of the clutter that may assemble in our lives and thoughts without us realizing it and it can weigh heavy. What it takes to sit and ponder, reorganize, prioritize and plan our goals both at work and in our private lives may yield great benefit we may not realize. I thought, that really was a good morning. What do I need to tackle that I have been procrastinating, what important “things” have I been attending to that are not really important? Have I made misguided decisions due to clutter? I once read: *“A fool and water will go the way they are diverted.”* How can I stay my course, being confident in the task and direction I take unless I give proper attention and thought?

It is amazing how our thinking changes like the flow of the tide without good direction. How important is being consistent and steadfast in the goals we set and keeping the things most important to us in front of us? Can we afford not to take a moment to reflect, consider and plan? This new year, I want to begin with a little reflection and thought each day... just a little time... now I wonder, how can I ever really measure the positive benefits from doing so... consistently...where is the 409? Best wishes for a new year!