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How to Edit Personal Files for Storage

Most people and organizations are not good editors of digital files. It's too easy to keep everything and simply buy more storage as needed. After all, it takes time and effort to weed out and dispose of files that are no longer relevant or needed.

There's a limit to everything, even if you have access to what seems to be endless storage.

So how does a person or company know which e-mail items to keep and which ones to delete? What about Word docs? Photos? Videos? Music?

1. The first step is to divide up personal files versus business-related ones. That is your No. 1 editing criteria. Make an immediate decision when you first encounter the file as to which category it falls into, and then half your editing job is done.

Many of our personal, social files get mixed up with business files on a daily basis, because we're using laptops, desktops and handheld devices for both purposes, whether we're in the office or not. As a result, we're finding a lot of them get lost or misplaced. When a file is misplaced, it takes up valuable space while being useless to its owner.

2. Secondly, a good e-mail spam filter from a company such as **CA, Symantec, Postini, McAfee, ZeroSpam, MessageOne, Kaspersky, or Azaleos** is a must. It's been estimated that 40 percent of all content that goes into digital storage comes through e-mail. Get rid of the obvious chaff first, that's a big space savings right off the top.

3. With a business file, look at whether it is directly related to your company or job. If you've received a pitch from a company about something that is irrelevant to the business, delete it immediately and don't let it take up any space in your e-mail database. The best time to edit something is when you first deal with it; you might not ever see it again and yet it will be taking up space in your storage.

E-mail alerts, such as Google alerts, can really build up within an e-mail database, too. Be very picky about how you use those.

4. As for **Microsoft Word** or **OpenOffice** documents, PDFs, spreadsheets, photos, or PowerPoint presentations related directly to your business: Obviously you need to keep the latest copy of these, at least for a specified time. If you store them immediately in the correct folders on the appropriate company storage tier (first-tier main disks, second-tier backup drives or archive), you're way ahead of the game.

The IT folks likely will already have the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure policies in place on those corporate drives, so you won't have to worry about those files after that.

5. Regarding personal photos, videos and music files: These can be more difficult to edit, because they are **so** personal. But after photographing a special event, such as a wedding, go through your photos as soon as possible and just keep the ones you know you will want for ever..

Commit videos to DVDs and save loads of space on your drives. As for music, you may want to dedicate an entire drive to just that, because MP3s, MP4s and others take up so much room.

You certainly love photos of Grandma, other family, and all your friends, but be really picky and keep only a few and then only the very best ones overall. Ask yourself: Would I print this picture and buy a frame for that it? If not, you probably should delete it.

That will leave you with a lot of not-so pictures, out-of-focus shots, people with eyes closed or making unfortunate faces ...delete them all, and your storage disks will thank you.