



Business Edge

# Take Charge of Your Desk or Become Swamped

by Jeff Davidson | Oct 31, 2014 ( )

Has a scene in a movie ever impacted you because the message seemed so relevant to your life? Our relationships with our desk first became clear to me after watching the movie, "Top Gun." Tom Cruise plays a Navy fighter pilot who handles some of the U.S. Navy's most expensive aircrafts. He must land them safely on aircraft carrier decks. For the landing to go smoothly, the decks must be clear and clean.

The same is true for desktops. When you bring information into your office, you can't merely chuck it on top of your already cluttered desk. You need to have a relatively clear surface before you park an item on your desk and hold it safely until its next departure.

On board, a clear deck is a critical prerequisite to a safe landing. The Navy implemented a system to prepare the landing strip. The order, "All hands on deck," traditionally meant that everyone, including senior officers, picked up a push broom and swept the deck completely clear when a plane was scheduled to land. Today, giant blowers and vacuums do the job. In any event, sailors' top priority is clearing the deck.

Career professionals need to make the same effort in maintaining a clean desktop. What can happen if there is debris on the deck as a plane approaches? What if an earlier plane has not left the landing strip? The approaching plane is likely to crash and burn!

Similarly, if you simply park piles of paper in the corner of your desk, you'll encounter problems when more arrive. Each new item you pile on will (figuratively) crash as your work accumulates, unless you take charge of the situation. Nobody is coming to help you manage your desk. You can't wait for some "organizing fairy" to arrive and wave a magic wand. There simply is no "clean-desk enforcement agency" to monitor the level of your piles — at least as of this writing.

## About the Author

*Jeff Davidson, CMC, MBA, is The Work-Life Balance Expert®. A speaker at many large companies, Jeff believes that career professionals today in all industries have a responsibility to achieve their own sense of work-life balance. He supports this quest through his websites [www.BreathingSpace.com](http://www.BreathingSpace.com) and [www.Work-LifeBalance.net](http://www.Work-LifeBalance.net). Jeff can be reached at [jeff@breathingspace.com](mailto:jeff@breathingspace.com).*