

# Coming Clean and Getting LEAN for Spring

March is here and springtime is peeping around the corner. I love this time of year. Even at the worst of times, things always seem to perk up a bit: people buying and selling homes; sprucing up, renovating, organizing and getting back in shape. That goes for businesses, too.

I talked to LEAN office extraordinaire, Cynthia Marsh-Croll of Croll Productive Synergy, about cutting the fat from business operations and improving productivity. Her word for the day was "automation."

"Automation is a powerful cost-effective tool to reduce waste and gain faster cash flow," says Croll. "When you examine automating a process you must have a very clear goal. In other words, have the end in mind."

Croll uses herself as an example, "I am in the process of creating a Lean Enterprise through automation and outsourcing to local suppliers. Prior to developing this I had my customer and contact database in one program, my bookkeeping in another and my email marketing online. Talk about redundancy! I was wasting hours of my time changing and updating similar information in multiple places. The worst part was all three programs did not 'talk' to each other, so information was not consistent across any of the applications."

"I was using my Microsoft Outlook add-on database to send emails unaware that I may be violating Anti-SPAM laws, which could have resulted in my company being blacklisted or shut down. So, the solution was to create a central database that worked with multiple programs and could meet all of my current needs, as well as federal guidelines."

"My new system has an email marketing program that is SPAM compliant and the database can integrate with my bookkeeping system. Imagine only entering the information once and all of your technology sharing that information without having to key in or download it into multiple programs. By April, my Lean Enterprise infrastructure will be complete. With the current technology, micro and small businesses can use the tools that larger organizations have been implementing for years."

Croll recommends businesses consider the following as they look to incorporate automation as a way to eliminate errors, redundancy and save hours of productivity:

- What is the ultimate goal I am trying to accomplish?
- What is my current workflow and standard operating procedures? (If you haven't established any, that's your first step!)
- What portions of this workflow could be automated to help information move quicker through an area or department(s) at a low cost, as well as resulting in a better utilization of staff?

Take that information and do some research on the available tools.



Make sure you have very clear-cut criteria to compare options and value. Now, go create your LEAN Enterprise.

**Spotlight: Allison Segreto, owner, Mission: Organization, Putnam Valley**  
Allison has been helping frazzled home owners and home-based business get their act together since 2002, but it's only in the last two years that she started doing stage performances.

Blending her artistic talents as an interior designer with her natural organizational abilities, Allison evolved a third service: Home Staging. Her new business motto is "Simplify Organize Stage" or SOS.

"Home Staging was a natural progression for me and my business," says Segreto. "Many of my interior design

clients needed help getting organized, and I saw an opportunity with Home Staging that was a hybrid of my skills. It's very fulfilling when you can help someone who is struggling to sell a home, to not only get it sold, but to get it sold in a relatively short time period, and for a price that is commensurate with the seller's perceived value," adds Segreto.

Staged Homes sell more quickly and for more money than houses that are not staged. Home Staging statistics from the Accredited Staging Professional (ASP) organization show, on average, that over 95 percent of ASP Staged Homes sell in 37 days or less, versus the average 212 days on the market for non-staged homes. That equals an 83-percent reduction of days on the market.

According to Barb Schwarz, the Creator of Home Staging, the investment in (ASP) staging your home will always be less than a price reduction on your home.

Segreto offers three easy do-it-yourself staging tips for home sellers:

- 1) Clean thoroughly.
- 2) Clear the clutter!
- 3) Rearrange and/or remove some furniture.

If this sounds like something you're interested in, Allison can come to your home for an initial consultation, conduct an analysis and provide you with a roadmap that will create the neutral, uncluttered and "mass market" friendly appeal you'll need to make a fabulous first impression with potential home buyers.

For more information on Mission: Organization, visit the website at [www.MissionOrganizationNY.com](http://www.MissionOrganizationNY.com) or call Allison directly at (845) 528-2444.

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