Do You Have A Junk Drawer?

Our house has a junk drawer in the kitchen. We have had one in every apartment and home for the last 40 years. It's an easily accessible drawer loaded with a myriad of items that support routine activities and the occasional unique project. The drawer contents range from a much needed, often used scissors, to an usual, and rarely used, box of safety pins. If you have a junk drawer you know exactly what I'm describing.

I'm guessing junk drawer contents change with the needs of each household and the preferences of the residents. Our junk drawer contains everything from pens to rulers, screwdrivers to magnifying glasses. I describe things in plural because it seems we have more than one of everything in the drawer. Magnets, balls of string, nails, pliers, lip balm, post-it notes, you get the picture.

Data Management

What about our junk drawer mirrors data management at community banks?

Virtually everything.

Banks have a myriad of data points related to customer information; transaction activity, product possession and utilization, contact information, email addresses; everything a bank needs to help customers manage frequent money-related transactions, along with specialized data, that is used far less often, to fill emerging financial needs.

Periodic Reorganization

Our junk drawer is a mess. We occasionally take time to reorganize the drawer. Throwing away things that seemed important when we put them in the drawer, but have never been used. In some cases, finding items in the drawer that we knew would be important to have someday. 'I forgot I put this in here,' is a common phrase you can hear when the junk drawer is being cleaned. However, on most days, the junk drawer contents are anything but organized. Similar to the bits and bites of information banks collect and process about their customers. When the information is well-organized it can be extremely useful.

A junk drawer can be a quick, easy, single source solution to solve problems or meet immediate needs. In this regard, the drawer could be a client management system (CRM) or core system customer information file (CIF). When the data is easy to access and readily available to solve a problem, the value is high. If the data is a mix of known and unknown parts, it no longer is a valued resource.

Redundancy

The redundancy of junk drawer contents also has an interesting correlation to banking. Our junk drawer has three rulers, screwdrivers in multiple sizes, hoards of twist ties, a variety of pens and pencils, and of course, the dried-up Sharpies that haven't worked in years. Banks do the same thing. They collect data multiple times and place it in the system in different places. Why? Because, at the time, it was important and we planned to use the information someday. Wouldn't it be great to have all that information in one place, easy to access and maintain?

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I'll Remember Where I Put It

The items we rediscover while cleaning up the junk drawer are an excellent reminder of how hard it is to remember where we put everything. That's why keeping things organized and in use becomes so important. Every homeowner knows where their junk drawer is located. That is not the case for extended family or visitors to the home. They are not privy to those details. Even if they know a junk drawer exists and know it contains something they need, they would require guidance to locate the drawer. How often do new employees enter a department or work area without instructions about the helpful information they could assess if someone would just provide the proper guidance?

Get Organized

Are you up for a challenge? Every journey begins with the first step. Start your data management adventure with a commitment to do something. Dedicate some time and resources this year to organizing your junk drawer, informing everyone about where it is located, and educating them how to use the contents.

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