



# MISE EN PLACE

## **CASE STUDY: ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY'S HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT INVESTS IN IMPROVING PRODUCTIVITY AND TEAM CONFIDENCE**

Client: Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) – Industry: Higher Education  
Project Location: Rochester, New York

### **Client Profile.**

Founded in 1829, RIT is an internationally recognized leader in professional and career-oriented education. Enrolling 15,000+ students in eight colleges, RIT offers *an incredible array of academic programs* with more than 92 undergraduate degrees, 70 graduate degrees, and four doctorate programs. As one of the oldest and largest cooperative education programs in the world, RIT helps students obtain a co-op (or an internship) with a leading company in their academic field of study, giving students real work experience to display on their resumes when they graduate. With a unique blend of rigor and imagination, of specialization and perspective, of intellect and practice, RIT is a vibrant community of ambitious and creative students from more than 95 countries.

### **Business Challenge.**

Finding something. That was the issue causing shared frustration by the Assistant Vice President of HR and her assistant. Getting their hands on the information they needed, when they needed it, just was not happening. To have a successful relationship and smoothly operating office environment, any good manager/assistant team needs to be able to find that synergy on how best to work together. Effectively managing paper, filing it, finding it, and processing it proved to be obstacles for this micro-team within the HR department. They recognized this issue but were also aware that this problem existed at a macro level; effective paper management was a department-wide issue.

People on the HR team had their own way of managing the life cycle of a document. From a document's creation, to its status or association with a project, to filing, to retrieving, to archiving, and to sharing, individual work style and thought processes defined where each document was located. While individual solutions *may* have been working, the highly interactive nature of the department required a system that everyone could use. As the department was growing so too was the level of disorganization growing, and the duplication of effort was increasing. In addition, the department needed to improve its confidentiality compliance process to meet industry standards. Productivity was suffering because there was no paper-management system to support the department's goals and objectives, and because of the department members' personal work styles.

Additional key issues included:

- Shared information was hard to find and keep track of.
- Retrieving information was a challenge. *Where did I put it?*
- There was no file "check out" process; once a file was removed, who had it?
- Duplicate copies made version control difficult.
- Photocopying costs were associated with multiple copies.
- "To dos" were falling through the cracks or not getting done in a timely fashion.
- The traditional filing system could accommodate only one idea at a time. To overcome this, multiple copies of a document were then filed several ways to capture the ideas or thoughts in that document.

- Workers felt that the lack of a system reflected on their competency at work, creating an undertow in an ordinarily dynamic and vibrant group.
- A member's absence due to vacation or illness was a further challenge due to the individualized and non-interactive nature of the person's filing system.

The team knew they had to seek outside help, but they did not know what they needed or what it would entail from a time, energy, commitment, and budget standpoint. However, the pain that the company's disorganization was causing was becoming too great to ignore. Something had to be done!

### **Solution.**

Starting with the micro-team of Patty Spinelli, Assistant Vice President (AVP) of Human Resources, and her assistant Georgeanne Hogan, we implemented The Paper Tiger software program. This tool created a filing system to accommodate their different thought processes, to allow either team member to retrieve filed documents, and to clear out the piles that had encroached on nearly every work surface in the office. A month later, another Manager/Administrative Assistant team "wanted what *they* have." While we were implementing The Paper Tiger for this team, and customizing it to their unique needs, work style, and personalities, a third Manager/Administrative team "wanted in on this."

The solution was infectious simply because it was working. People within the department saw that Patty kept her office clean, found information when she wanted it, and had a sense of calm.

We further enhanced the solution by having all The Paper Tiger users attend a *GO System* Workshop. As Kathleen M. Martin, RIT Associate Director—RIT Human Resources for Employment, Employee Relations & Professional Development, put it, "*This is what tied it all together. I now know how to handle the work in progress and how it all connects to an effective filing system.*"

To date, this combination of The Paper Tiger and *The GO System* has continued to spread throughout HR, with 16 people as well as 4 other departments within the university implementing this solution as well.

### **Notable Results.**

- A new filing system can scale and grow to meet the changing compliance and general information management needs.
- Everyone in the department can easily understand and use the filing system and supporting process.
- The team now has a centralized filing system and "location." Everyone knows what information is available and where it is.
- All information is captured within The Paper Tiger database, making it extremely quick and simple to retrieve information.
- The department now has a sign-out system so everyone knows where the files are at all times if they are not in the filing cabinets.
- Per industry standards, confidentiality compliance has improved.

*"The help from Ann Michael Henry [Organization and Productivity Consultant at Mise En Place] was invaluable," said Patty Spinelli. "What she did for us was more than just clean out our files. She was able to successfully put us in control of our information instead of it controlling us. We are more productive and confident in the way we manage information today. A common filing system that accommodates our individual work styles and job responsibilities has had an incredible impact on our department."*

- The team feels more confident knowing the information found in the files is the most up-to-date version.
- The team works better together. The sense of individual confidence and productivity has increased, helping to stimulate better collaboration and team efficiencies.
- The system makes the offices (the overall department) look more efficient and organized—no more worries or embarrassing drop-in moments.
- Ramping up new hires or helping those making job transitions is so much easier and quicker when it comes to assisting them in finding information pertinent to their roles.

*"It doesn't unnerve me anymore when I spread out papers all over my desk. While it may look like things are out of control, I am fully confident that in a matter of minutes I can, if necessary, reset and get things back in order,"* said Kathleen M. Martin. *"So, if things are a little crazy for a couple of days, that's ok. I know what I need to do and when to wrap up and get myself on track with other projects quickly and easily. It feels great to be in control of my workload and environment versus it controlling me!"*

For more information about the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), visit [www.rit.edu](http://www.rit.edu).  
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#### **ABOUT MISE EN PLACE**

Mise En Place is an organization and productivity-improvement consulting firm that works with organizations throughout the United States. Our clients are interested in developing easy-to-use and sustainable organization systems and processes to increase worker productivity. Organization and Productivity Consultant Ann Michael Henry has years of experience helping numerous business owners, executives, and their staff create organizational systems based on their specific work style and needs, and these systems strategically align with internal business processes and procedures.

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