

# RestartGTD

Get (back) on the GTD band wagon!

## GTD: Before and After

Posted on [2011/12/29](#)

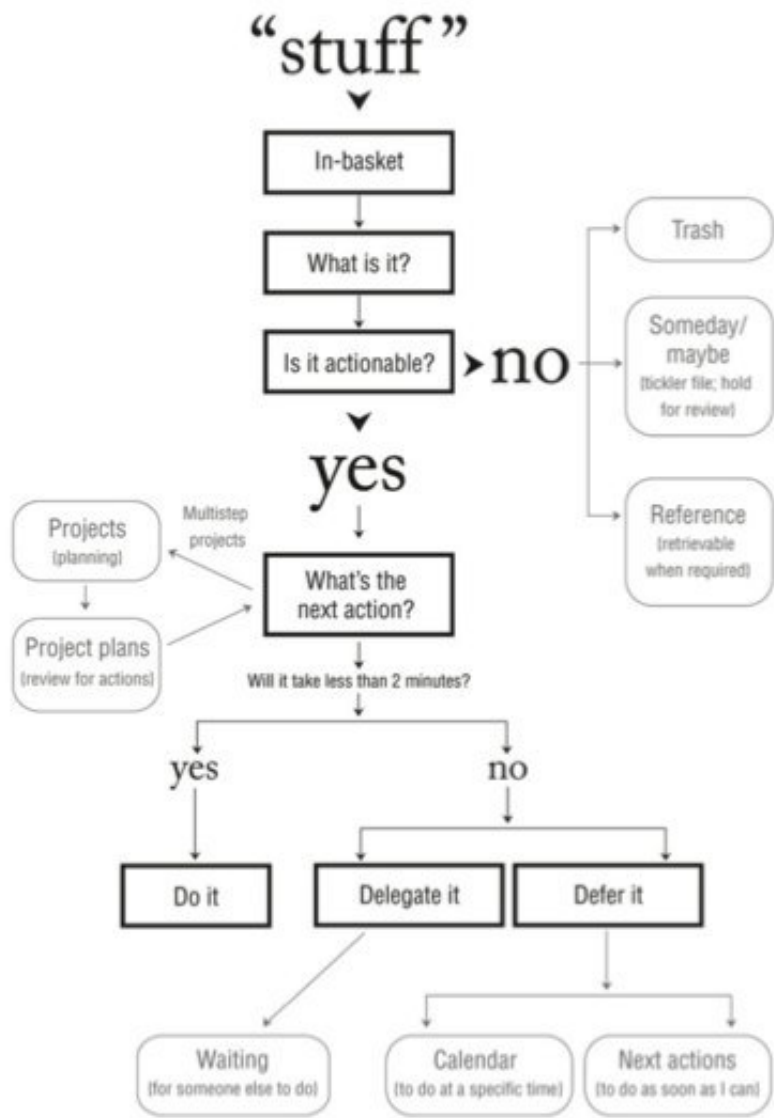
[GETTING THINGS DONE](#) (hereafter GTD) has had a big impact on me. As witness, this post shows as much of the before/after GTD as I can articulate, it will evolve as I refine the post into enough detail to please visual learners (you know who you are John Nieberall!).

Question 1: What is GTD?

To my mind, GTD is an architecture for information organization and processing that allows a person to maximize efficiency and effectiveness while dealing with overwhelming inflows of drama and data under deadline. GTD may look like a self help book, it may feel like a religious cult when you have a GTD evangelist on your chest (hi Ian!) telling you to read and then buy crap, and then re-read. But, GTD is information organization architecture.

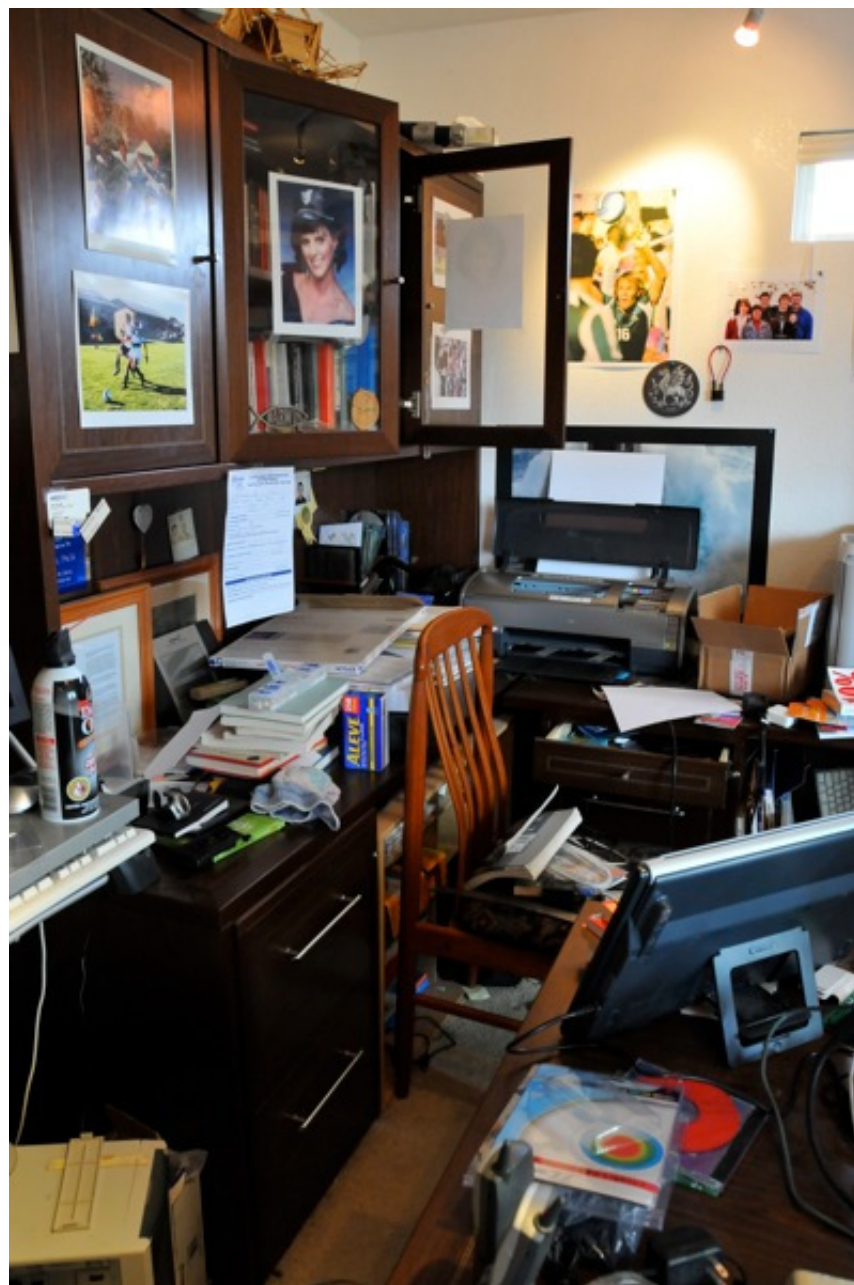
GTD is important because life does not come with an owner's manual that says "get organized in a sustainable high performance way." So people go through school, work, phd programs (I did all three) and never spend a day getting organized beyond coping with the next deadline.

Here is the GTD architecture diagram taken from the PDF accompanying the [Audible version of GTD](#):



Question 2: What did your life/office look like before GTD (circa 2009)?





Not in the office, I also had a 5 drawer horizontal filing cabinet with 94,000 pages of journal articles, research data, and miscellaneous documents that were too good to throw out but not good enough to use. Here is the filing cabinet in the garage next to the Y2K water

barrel.



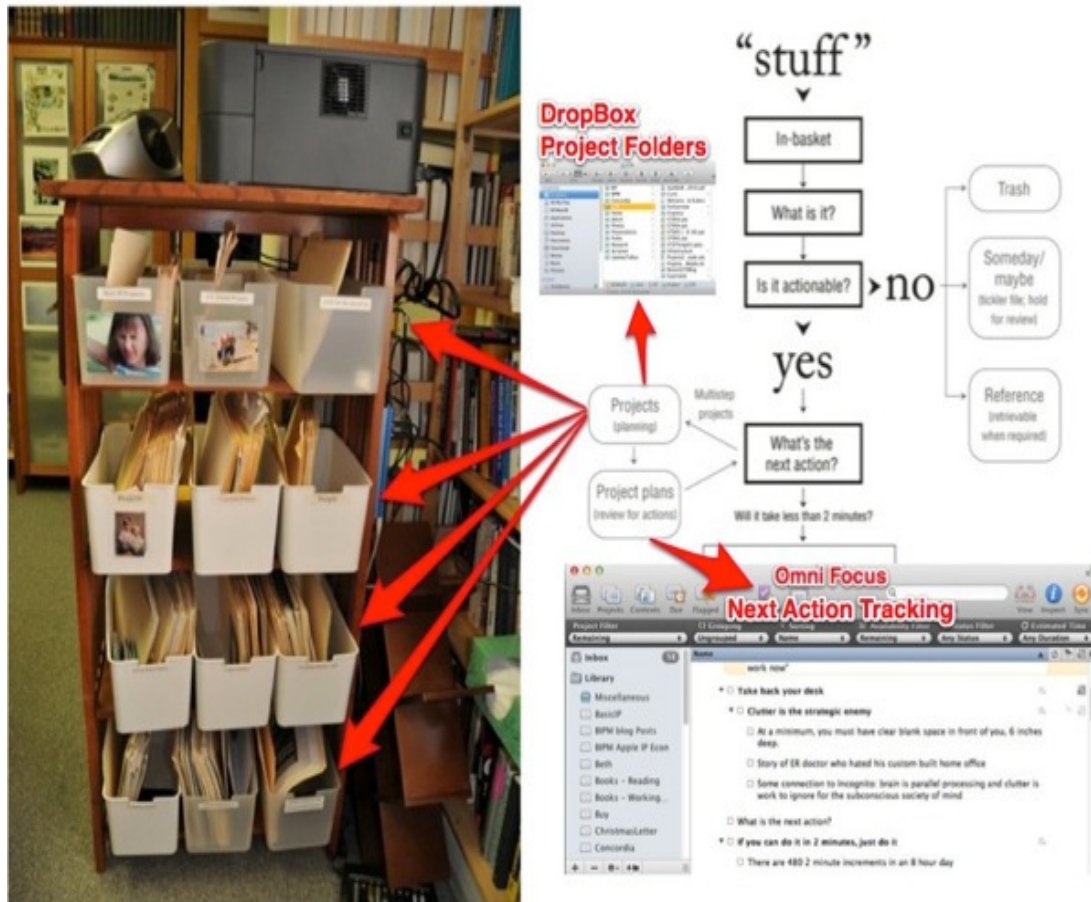
Question 3: What does your life/desk (Circa 2012) look like after implementing GTD?





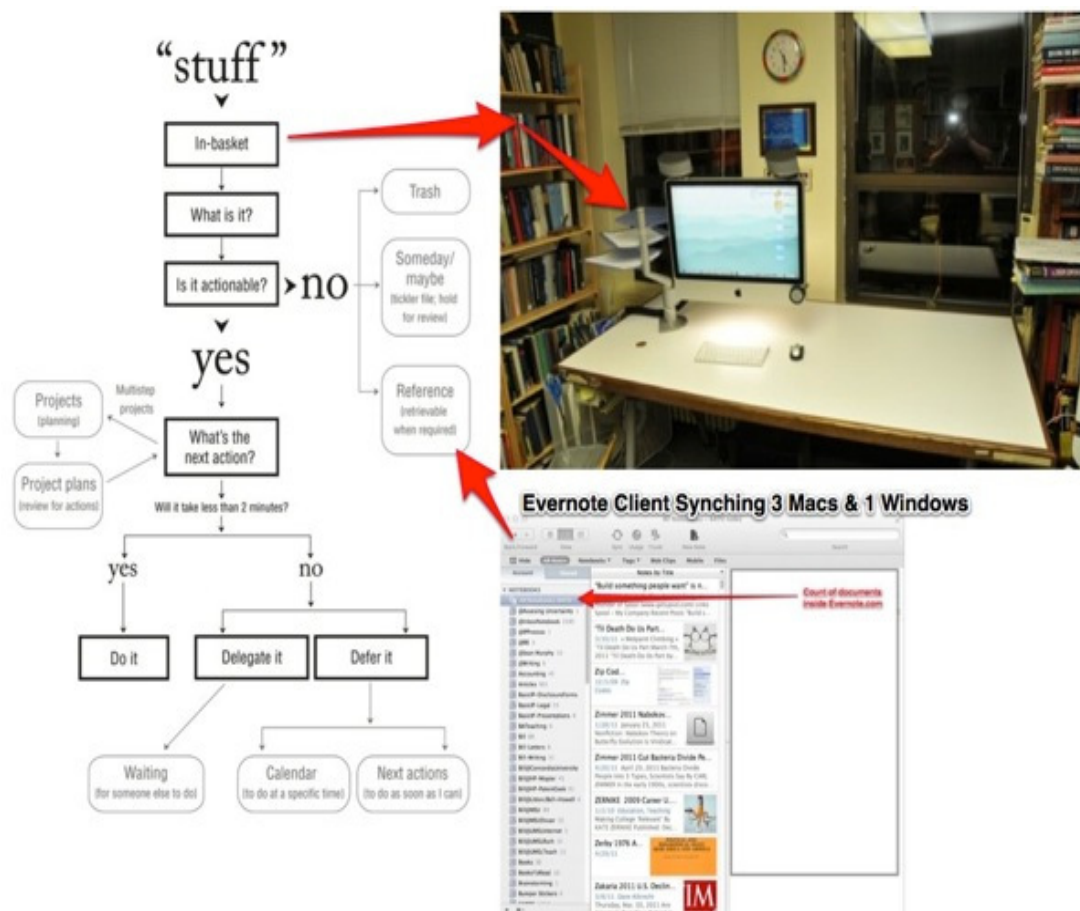
Note that this desk is: (1) large 6' x 35", (2) clutter free from the surface up 6", (3) canted (the front edge is 1" closer to the floor than the back edge). I will write more posts on desks and their requirements as taking back my desk was a key stepping stone for implementing GTD.

Next comes my physical filing system ([Target totes](#)) with 5" book ends in the tote if there are not enough manilla folders to completely fill the tote:



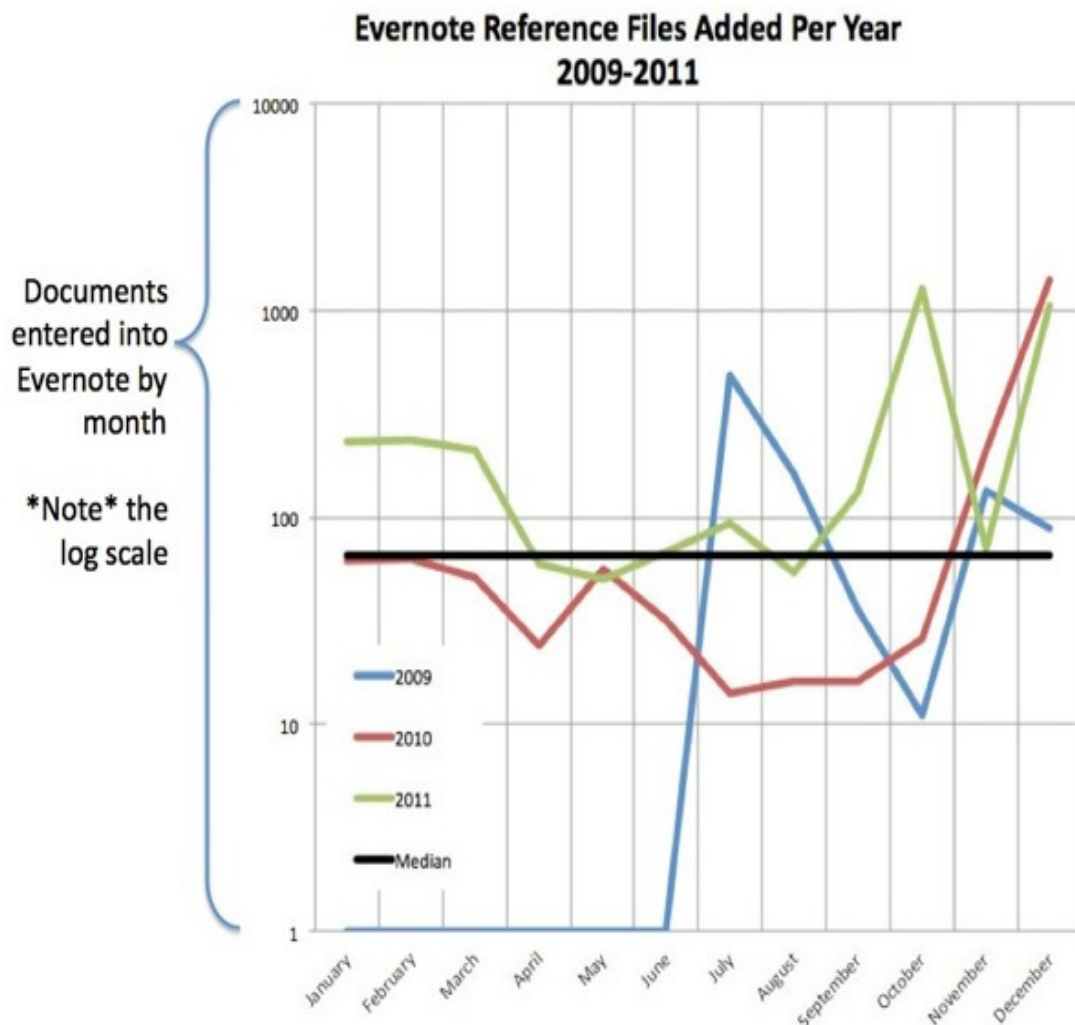


Before GTD had the 5 drawer horizontal file cabinet, after GTD has an electronic reference filing system in Evernote:



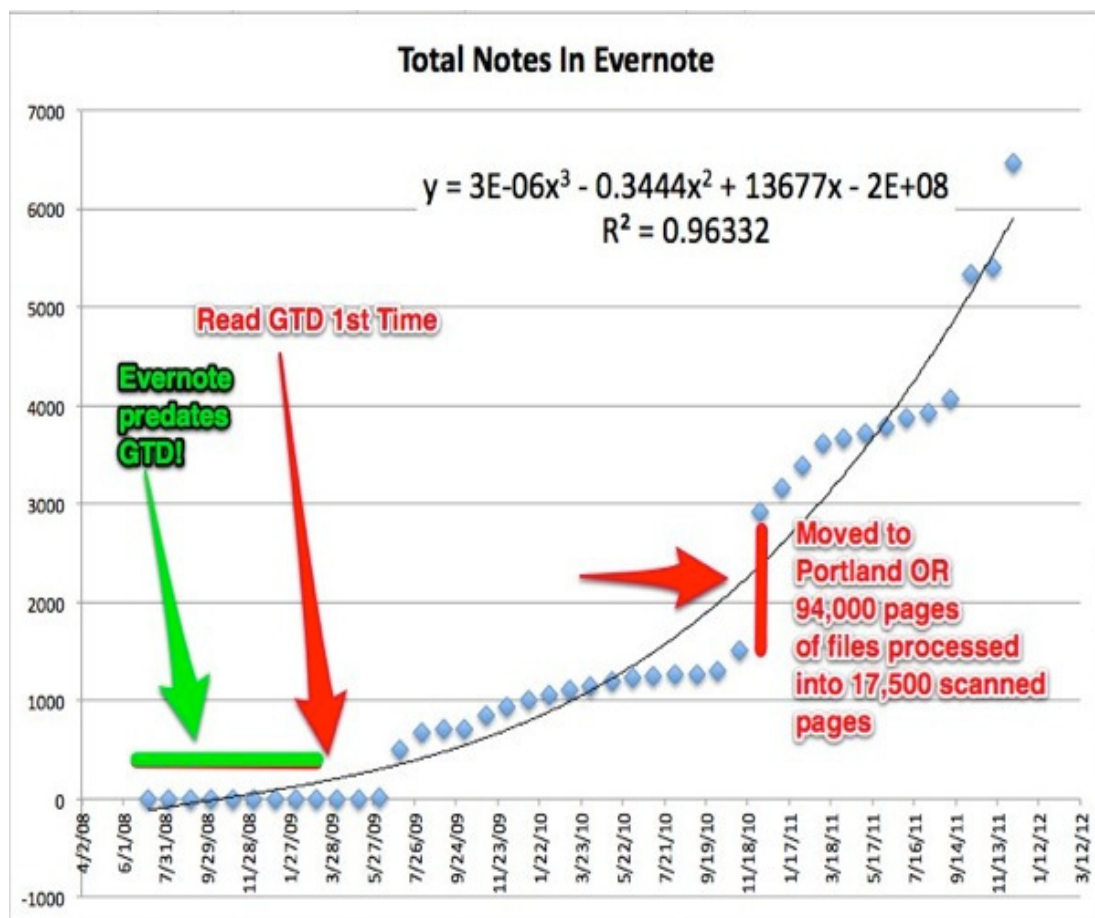
To get from paper to Evernote I raked through the 94,000 pages of paper in the file cabinet, and ask myself for each document "Will there ever be a next action for this document?" 80% of the documents were instant "No!" and they went straight into recycling. The 20% that were yes or maybe, were 17,500 pages which I scanned in a week on my [Fujitsu ScanSnap S1500](#).

Here is my annual capture of reference file information. The median monthly count of documents captured, is 65. I enter more documents at the end of the year, which surprises me. Over time Evernote is becoming more and more essential as external short term memory. Many of the documents I capture in evernote are web pages, the evernote Webclipper and Evernote Clearly browser add ins have become indispensable for me.



Here is my cumulative Evernote document count over the past three years. The exponential increase in files in evernote has happened as I have scanned and recycled. At the end of 2010 I scanned paper and recycled. At the end of 2011 I scanned a collection of 300 3.5" floppy disks with research data sets and other archives on them.



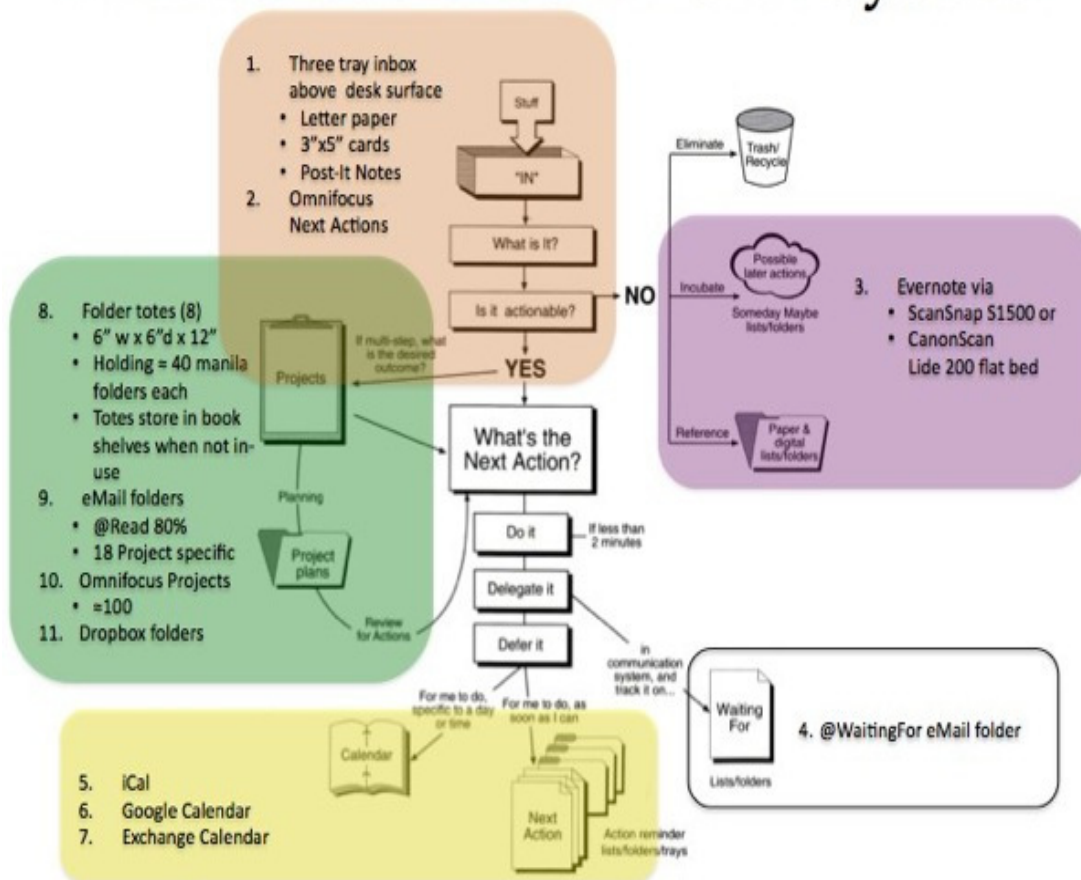


My final offering to the visual learner on Before/After GTD is a worksheet that covers more pieces of my system ([GTDInfrastructureEvolution01b.xlsx](#)):

Bill Meade's GTD-drive infrastructure evolution		Version 1.0 12/10/2011
Component	Before	After
Reference filing	Piles of papers "I know where everything is!"	Evernote
Ideas	Remembering	One idea, one piece of paper
Desk	Mess	Masterpiece
Wallet	Folding Billfold	Passport Wallet
Briefcase	Shoulder Carried	Rolling Kensington
Notepad	Sketch Book	BookBook with 3"x5" adaptation
Office/Computer Supplies	Random boxes and piles	33 Totes organized neatly with content labels
Weekly Review	None	?
Speakers	Bookshelf speakers on desk	Small Bose speakers on top of iMac Subwoofer makes a great foot-rest under desk
Phone	Land-Line on desk Cell phone on desk	Land-line on desk Skype across all computers Cell phone on desk
Bluetooth headset for Cell	NA	\$80 Plantronics EXCELLENT headset.
Desk Surface	Dark wood, chipped	White via formica (office) and Whiteboard contact paper (home office)
Whiteboards	None	End of bookcases, open wall surfaces Credenza cabinet doors above desk, surface of credenza desk via cotact paper
Cables	Tangled everywhere	Twist tied, wrapped, & hidden on top of desk In IKEA cable management trays under desk
External hard drive	On desk	Out of sight under desk in cable management tray
USB hubs	On desk	Out of sight via sticky tape behind iMac
Windex	On desk	In cable management tray under work surface
Having guests in office	Fire drill to pick up and hide	Little to no pick up for any meeting
Number of desks	1. Office desk	1. Work desk 2. Home desk 3. Kensington roller briefcase with specific organization 4. Folio for 3x5 cards, manila folders, and laptop/iPad 5. Wallet functions as a desk I a pinch (3x5 cards and pens)
Enabling Infrastructure	1. Power outlet on desk top desk 2. Clamped-on moitor arm 3. Freestanding paper trays 4. Laptop on stand	1. Strategically employed monitor arm (#1 clutter killing tool) 2. Paper trays JBWelded to monitor arm base 3. Ethernet switch and USB hub double-sided-sticky-taped to monitor arm and iMac where they are not visible as clutter 4. Monitor replaced with 24" iMac all-in-one computer 5. Folder rack attached to moitor arm used to keep props near at hand, without visual clutter 6. New IKEA desk legs and trays allowing desk to cant down 7. Twelve outlet power strip under desk 8. Wireless keyboard and Logitech wireless travel mouse (light weight, 1 battery only)
Computers	1. Macbook Pro 17" 2. Synology DS508 NAS	1. iMac 24" at School Office 2. Macbook Pro 15" at home desk 3. Macbook Air 11" i7 2.1 pound portable for in-between 4. 2 Synology 5 drive NASes, one for home, other for school office 5. Evernote for reference filing 6. Dropbox for project files
Project Files	1. eMail folders (Read and 18 project folders) 2. Folders in "My Documents" 3. Folders on DS508 NAS	1. eMail folders (Read and 18 project folders) 2. Folders in Dropbox

Here is a summary view of how I am doing GTD after 3 years:

# Bill Meade's Trusted GTD System



Share this:

Twitter 8

Facebook 9

Google +1

LinkedIn

StumbleUpon

Email

Pinterest

More

Like this:



Like

Be the first to like this.

This entry was posted in [Getting Started with GTD](#) by [bill@basicip.com](mailto:bill@basicip.com). Bookmark the [permalink \[http://restartgtd.com/2011/12/29/gtd-journey-after/\]](http://restartgtd.com/2011/12/29/gtd-journey-after/).

10 THOUGHTS ON "GTD: BEFORE AND AFTER"

Pingback: [Meade's Theory of the Perfect GTD Desk | restartgtd](#)

Pingback: [Meade's Theory of the Perfect GETTING THINGS DONE \(GTD\) Desk | restartgtd](#)



Toy

on **2012/01/02 at 7:50 am** said:

Glad to visit this blog, keep it going.



**Charlene R**

on **2012/01/04 at 2:51 pm** said:

“amazin”



**restartgtd**

on **2012/01/04 at 2:56 pm** said:

Thank you! What do you wish you could talk to someone else about in GTD? [bill@basicip.com](mailto:bill@basicip.com)



**rhardman**

on **2012/01/05 at 7:41 pm** said:

AWESOME... really helpful as I'm trying to incorporate the same tools. Keep up the great work...



**Evan**

on **2012/01/08 at 1:55 am** said:

Could you go into a bit more detail on how you tag things in Evernote to make sure they're easy to find/reference?



**restartgtd**

on **2012/01/08 at 12:38 pm** said:



I find stuff in evernote by combining notebooks, search, and tags. I have 7,242 documents in my Evernote account. I have 95 folders, zero saved searches, and 320 tags. When I enter a document into evernote if the substance of the document is archival (scanner data from my PhD research for example) I'll make a folder for that data and then just manually pile up the files into the notebook. If the substance of the document is general reference, I'll most likely put the file into "Articles" which is a notebook that I have in mock-APLA sort order "author (year) Title" so that I can find the authors I read a lot (Kurzweil, Guy Kawasaki, or Steve Blank, or Geoff Moore) easily and quickly find the document I'm thinking of. When I import reference material I'm likely to make up a tag on the spot for it by asking myself "What is the one word that I will think to search on for this article?" But more and more, I just search for documents and find that any document in Evernote can be located by search. The tagging makes me feel safe, but I'm not sure that it is paying its way for me.

One thing I wish Evernote had, was in-attachment search. I just realized that Evernote is not searching within MS Word files (although it is searching fine in PowerPoint files) or my archived mbox Eudora mail archives. So, if you need to put a lot of weight on search, then Microsoft Search is likely a more robust solution. If you run Windows and have the Evernote client installed, you can use Microsoft search instead of Evernote's search to get inside your attachments.

[bill@basicip.com](mailto:bill@basicip.com)



Lasse

on **2012/01/13 at 7:18 pm** said:

Wow, just found this blog. It looks great! Very useful and inspiring, it seems.

I'm also on my way back on the wagon, having gotten a boost by discovering the lethal combination of Evernote and ScanSnap S1500.

I'm also sad that Evernote only scans PDF and images.

How are you able to search the Evernote attachments with Windows Search?

As far as I understand it, the databases\attachments folder is only a buffer area / workspace that holds the attachments that you have been opening/manipulating on that computer.

I have about 1500 attachments in my database but only around 70 files in the attachments subfolder... ?



[bill@basicip.com](mailto:bill@basicip.com)

on 2012/01/13 at 7:35 pm said:

Assumption: You have the Evernote client for Windows installed on your computer. Then, when you put a file in Evernote, it stores that file locally on your Windows computer, and then replicates a file up to the cloud. It is my understanding that Windows search does the full text indexing of files on your local computer. Concordia University is a Windows shop. I've been in extended discussions with the Windows zealots about the pros and cons of Dropbox, Windows Search, and Evernote. The WinZealots maintain that Windows search is superior, because it indexes everything (with the exception of PDFs that have not had OCR run inside them).

What they really mean, is that Windows search gets inside Word files, Zip file, etc. Evernote goes not there. :-)

But, if you want your PDFs searchable on Windows Search, you'd better run them through the Acrobat text recognition routines. And then, Windows search will find everything that is in Evernote, and everything that is in the attachments that Evernote does not index.

Like the 8-ball, if this does not satisfy, ask again!

[bill@basicip.com](mailto:bill@basicip.com)

☺