12 quick IT productivity wins
Quick tips to boost your productivity

By **Dan Tynan** (InfoWorld) 02/03/2007

Stop us if this story sounds familiar. You've been asked to a) keep your infrastructure humming and b) come up with innovative ways to use technology to boost the bottom line. Meanwhile, your resources are stretched tighter than a US$2 string on a banjo and you spend so much time putting out fires you should be wearing a helmet and carrying a hose.

We feel your pain. So we talked to tech pros and came up with 12 ways to boost your productivity without investing tens of thousands of dollars or six months of your life.

Some tips you can implement right now. Others may take a few days or weeks to fully deploy but will pay off handsomely in the long run.

So what are you waiting for?

1. Stop losing, start finding

You'd think IT pros would be naturals at managing files. But you'd be wrong, says Laura Leist, an organizational consultant and owner of Eliminate Chaos. Leist says she recently spent five days with the IT staff at a major hospital in Seattle, teaching them how to name files and put them in folders other than My Documents.

"I've spent many, many hours in conference rooms talking to companies that have no structure to their servers, no naming conventions for documents, and duplicate copies of documents because people in their organization don't know what someone else has created so they do it all over again," Leist explains.

At the workgroup level, the basic prescription is absurdly simple: Set up a common area on the network servers for storing documents. Get department heads to decide what should be stored there, who should be able to access what, and what the file-naming conventions should be.

Then install a search app such as Google Desktop or Microsoft's Windows Desktop Search to find files across local and mapped network drives -- or, as an enterprise-class quick fix, deploy a search solution such as Search Appliance or ISYS:Web9 that can crawl the entire network.

Think about it: How much of your work life do you squander trying to find stuff? As Leist says, most people know they need to get their act together, but never seem to have the time. As a result, they waste a whole lot more of it.

Laura Leist is a highly sought after organizational and productivity consultant, trainer, speaker and author. She has spent more than 15 years with corporations, small businesses and individuals across America, helping to improve efficiency by using technology, paper management and time management. Leist serves on the board of directors of the National Association of Professional Organizers and has been recognized as one of Washington State's 40 Under 40 Entrepreneurs in 2001. She is the author of three books, including Eliminate Chaos…The 10-Step Process to Organize Your Home & Life and Organizing and Customizing with Microsoft Outlook. For more information, please contact Leist at 425.670.2551 or via email at laura@elimiantechaos.com.