

The Integrator

A systems integrator newsletter written with EVERYONE in mind

Dear Readers,

Welcome. This issue of *The Integrator* is all about bringing order to chaos.

The **Feature Article** considers how to control clutter — a common source of chaos in our lives.

Product Focus shows how a software package can help alleviate the chaos of disparate data formats and locations.

Finally, in **G Corner**, we examine a particular file format that can help *prevent* data chaos.

Enjoy the issue!

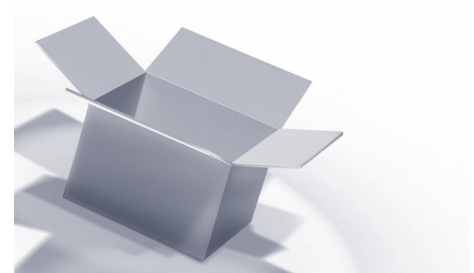
- Chris White

ThinkG Consulting LLC

Get Free of Clutter — Unstuff Your Life

Stuff, stuff, stuff

When I first left home for college, I brought with me only a few essential items. Ten years and 10 relocations later my stuff needed a U-Haul van to be moved. One year after that, marriage brought enough more stuff to require an entire moving truck. Soon after came the babies in the baby carriage — and they come standard with much, much more stuff.



Donning clutter glasses

At some point I came to the realization that more stuff was not the answer and that it only gets in the way. I began to see the world through “clutter glasses”. Rather than ignore clutter or be hindered by it I sought to identify it and be rid of it.

A hindrance to progress

Albert Einstein once said that “Great spirits have often encountered violent opposition from weak minds.” Along the same line, great endeavors are often hindered by clutter. Author Richard Carlson writes “Don’t sweat the small stuff.” Drawn from that wisdom is the following: Don’t sweat the clutter — just get rid of it.

Five Clutter zones

There are five zones in our lives which act like clutter magnets, impeding our progress. These zones are: the desk, the home, the schedule, the mind, and the life. Each zone needs regular clearing out.

Zone 1 —The Desk

What desk does not have worthless paper piles? What’s in them? How long have they been there? Are they still pertinent? The best way to conquer piles is to prevent them from ever developing in the first place.

The T.A.R.F. Strategy

Here’s what to do. Take action upon every paper that comes to your desk as soon as possible in one of these four ways:

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T – Trash it.

A – Act upon it.

R – Refer it to someone else.

F – File it.

The first inclination should be toward trashing it. Shred it, recycle it, or dispose of it, and be quick about it. If the item cannot be trashed, then act upon it, immediately if possible. The next option, if pertinent, is to refer it – make the clutter a problem for someone else. Do not take the final option of filing it lightly; be certain not to be simply hiding piles among files.

Zone 2 — The Home

The home zone can be a challenge. There are just too many places for clutter to hide. We tend only to clear out clutter to make room for more clutter. Borrow a lesson from *Feng Shui* and recognize that open spaces help foster peace and focus. There is freedom to be found in selling, donating, recycling, or disposing of obsolete possessions, and in beholding the empty spaces that result.

Clear the closet

Here is a trick for clearing the closet of clothes that are no longer of use. Reverse every hanger in the closet so it is backwards. As clothes are worn and returned to the closet turn the hanger back to the normal orientation. At the end of one year discard any clothes which still have a backwards hanger. If an article of clothing has not been worn in an entire year then it's likely safe to discard. Apply strategies like this one around the home to achieve more open spaces.

Zone 3 — The Schedule

Our schedules, more than any other zone, come un-

der attack by others who always seem to want to stake a claim on our time. We must be *guardians* of our schedule and resist adding that 'one more item.'

Zone 4 — The Mind

Find a trusted place to record every detail that needs remembering: to-do items, meetings, shopping lists, etc. Use a PDA, day-planner, or wall calendar. The key is to record the details in a trusted place then simply forget them. There is no reason for *recorded* details to clutter the mind.

Zone 5 — The Life

De-cluttering the life requires perspective. There is the story of a business school professor who sought to teach his students an important lesson. He put a large glass jar on a table and carefully placed inside the jar several fist-size rocks. He then asked his students whether the jar was full. The students all agreed that the jar was indeed full. The professor next pulled out a bag of thumb-size pebbles and dropped them into the jar filling in the spaces among the large rocks. He again asked his students whether the jar was full to which they again agreed, this time a little more tentatively, that the jar was indeed full. The professor next pulled out a bucket of sand and poured it into the jar completely filling in all remaining crevices. He asked his students then what lesson was to be learned. The lesson of the exercise, he explained, is that you had better make room for the big, important things in life first before the small details fill in all remaining spaces.

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Conclusion

We cannot always (if ever) completely eliminate clutter. Life is full of details and we are surrounded by items with importance that depreciates over time. The key is to control clutter and not be controlled by it. Seek always to cut through the clutter and get to the important things.



Product Focus

DIAdem: Answer to Data Viewing Dilemma

Dilemma: Research facility or manufacturing plant accumulates data in disparate file formats and network locations. Cross-analysis becomes increasingly difficult if not impossible.

Craved solution: A single application that can read, cross-analyze, and report all data assets.

Ready answer: DIAdem fulfills this craving where other applications cannot.

- DIAdem can import data from over **50** industry-standard file and database formats.
- DIAdem can handle data files with over **100** billion data values. Excel cannot come close.
- DIAdem has built-in analysis functions and visualization graphs for which engineers and scientists long.

tists long.

- Sophisticated reports are defined in an intuitive, drag-and-drop environment.
- LabVIEW can programmatically populate DIAdem report templates and print to PDF.

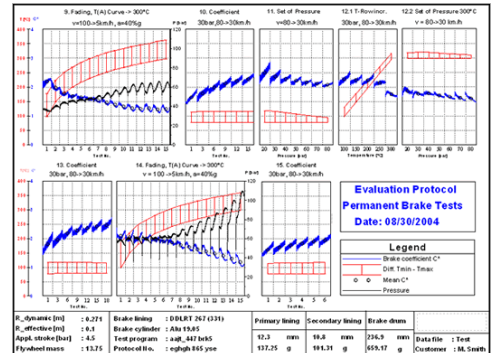


Image Courtesy of National Instruments Corporation.

Look to DIAdem to resolve (or prevent) your data viewing dilemma.



TDM: File Format of Choice

If you have not yet considered the TDM file format, then it's time to start.

TDM (Test Data Exchange) format answers three of the top challenges developers face in selecting a file format.

Challenge #1: Compact

Large data sets should be saved in binary to conserve disk space. TDM consists of two files: an XML header file and a binary data file. Data are stored in the binary file with compression for speed and compactness.

Challenge #2: Metadata

Raw data alone is often of little value without the many details related to data sets that must also be captured. TDM metadata,

called properties, are organized in a hierarchy within the header file.

Challenge #3: Compatibility

Data also needs to be viewed, analyzed, and reported. TDM is the native file format of DIAdem. Not only

can DIAdem view, analyze, and report TDM files, it can also help find the right data file. DIAdem has a Google-like ability to index and search through TDM properties.

On your next application consider the

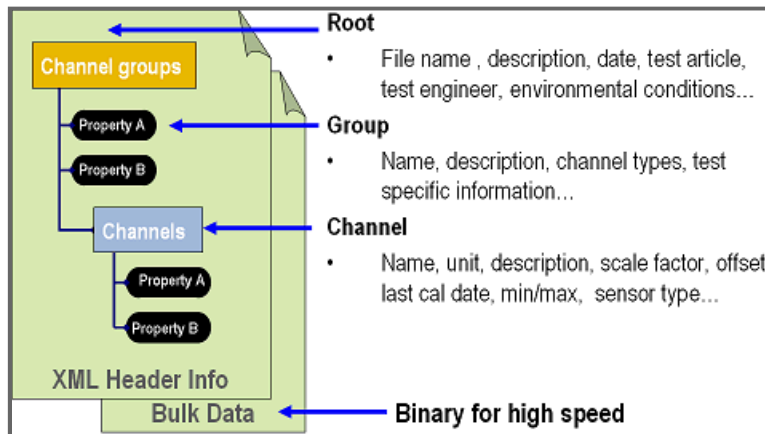


Image Courtesy of National Instruments Corporation.

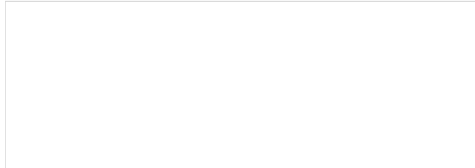
benefits of standardizing on TDM.





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