

HARNESSING THE POWER OF DEFERRED IDEAS & UNRESOLVED ISSUES

By Shawn M. Galloway

It is all too easy to be consumed by immediate demands and pressing priorities and ignore less urgent issues that are difficult but important to solve. Amid the hustle and bustle, there exists a valuable concept that holds immense potential: the “someday file.”

The someday file is a designated space where invaluable ideas, unresolved issues and tantalizing possibilities are carefully preserved, awaiting the opportunity to blossom and contribute to future successes. Perhaps a future employee brings an idea they learned from a previous employer who struggled with a similar issue. Perhaps as thinking and technology mature, what is impossible today becomes possible tomorrow. Perhaps “not today” is the right answer at present, but the decision to never deal with the issue is not.

The concept of the someday file first came about during a facilitated client brainstorming session. The client, a very large paper mill, was working to overcome a perception among staff that management did not fix complex issues but rather allowed them to be forgotten. They wanted to encourage staff to bring issues to management and trust that their concerns were heard even if they were not addressed immediately. The client implemented the someday file, and over time they saw improvements in perception and were even able to address old and complex challenges. The someday file started as a physical folder curated in a file cabinet and has since evolved into a shared electronic folder. It remains a game changer for fostering innovation, problem solving, and personal growth and is an idea all should leverage. This article explores why.

Cultivating Innovation & Creativity

The someday file serves as a sanctuary for creativity and innovation and provides a haven for ideas that may not be immediately actionable but might possess the seeds of future breakthroughs. By intentionally setting aside these nascent concepts, individuals and organizations can cultivate a culture that encourages bold ideation and unconventional thinking. The someday file is a breeding

ground for the unconventional, the untested and the visionary—where wild, unrefined ideas patiently await their moment to revolutionize the status quo.

Nurturing Strategic Thinking

The someday file can function as a strategic arsenal. When individuals and teams stash away issues that pose complex challenges or may require unconventional solutions, they can revisit these matters later with fresh perspectives, enhanced resources or evolved circumstances. This deliberate approach to storing unresolved issues acknowledges the dynamic nature of problems and the value of patience in seeking optimal solutions—what may seem insurmountable today could transform into an opportunity tomorrow.

Embracing Growth & Adaptation

Personal and professional growth often hinge on the ability to adapt to, evolve with, overcome or capitalize upon changing circumstances. The someday file embodies this principle, validating the belief that some challenges may not be ripe for resolution today but might be perfectly suited for resolution in the future. It encourages individuals to embrace a long-term outlook, nurturing a mindset that embraces growth, adaptation and the transformative power of time.

Fostering Resilience & Patience

The ability to exercise patience and resilience is a virtue. The someday file is a testament to this, highlighting the importance of acknowledging that not all problems can be solved instantly—nor should solutions be rushed—and few workers appreciate knee-jerk reactions. By designating a specific space for unresolved matters, individuals and organizations can cultivate the discipline of patience,

knowing that some of the most valuable solutions take time to materialize.

Leveraging Collective Wisdom

A significant benefit of the someday file is its ability to harness collective wisdom. It acts as a repository where diverse minds can contribute unique experiences and insights. When individuals—whether new employees, seasoned veterans or external collaborators—bring fresh perspectives, the someday file becomes a melting pot of ideas. Sharing access to this file electronically allows for collaboration across departments and even geographies. By drawing upon

PRACTICAL WAYS TO USE A SOMEDAY FILE

- **Create a designated someday file.** Establish a physical or digital space where ideas, unresolved issues and potential opportunities can be stored for future exploration.
- **Review and revisit regularly.** Schedule periodic check-ins to assess whether previously deferred ideas have become feasible or relevant under new circumstances, technologies or priorities.
- **Encourage open contribution.** Invite employees and collaborators at all levels to add their thoughts and insights to the file, fostering a culture of inclusion, creativity and psychological safety.
- **Use as a strategic tool.** Draw upon the someday file during planning sessions or problem-solving meetings to ensure that past ideas and lessons inform current decisions and strategies.
- **Leverage collective wisdom.** Share access across departments or teams to gather diverse perspectives and uncover innovative solutions that might otherwise be overlooked.
- **Promote patience and long-term thinking.** Use the someday file to reinforce that not every problem needs an immediate fix, as some ideas need time to mature before they can succeed.

Vantage Point

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Improving Decision-Making Processes

The someday file facilitates improved decision-making by offering a comprehensive overview of previously considered ideas and unresolved issues. This historical context can provide valuable insights when making strategic decisions, helping to prevent reinvention of the wheel or the recurrence of familiar challenges. By reviewing past considerations, decision-makers can better align future actions with organizational goals, ensuring that decisions are informed by past learnings and are strategically sound.

Facilitating Organizational Learning

Going beyond immediate problem-solving, the someday file serves as an important tool for organizational learning. As ideas are revisited and solutions are implemented, the file acts as a record of evolution and progress. It captures the journey of ideas from raw concepts to refined solutions. This continuous learning process not only contributes to organizational intelligence but enhances the capabilities of individuals, empowering them to apply lessons learned to future challenges.

Encouraging Psychological Safety

The nature of the someday file encourages individuals to propose ambitious ideas without fear of immediate scrutiny or rejection. This fosters a culture of speaking up, where unconventional ideas receive consideration they might not get in a more risk-averse environment. By ensuring that bold ideas are preserved and eventually evaluated, organizations cultivate a culture that values innovation and the pursuit of excellence.

Enabling Resource Optimization

By deferring certain ideas and problems until resources or conditions are more favorable, organizations can effectively optimize their resources. The someday file acts as a queue, ensuring that efforts are focused when they can have the greatest impact. This strategic allocation of resources prevents inefficiencies and allows for more deliberate and thoughtful engagement with complex issues.

Reevaluating Priorities

The presence of a someday file prompts regular reevaluation of priorities. Over time, as circumstances change



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and new challenges emerge, priorities must also shift. The someday file ensures that issues and ideas previously set aside are periodically reexamined in light of current demands and opportunities. This ongoing practice helps organizations stay agile and responsive, ready to capitalize on emerging opportunities and address evolving challenges.

The someday file is far more than a repository of postponed ideas and unresolved issues; it symbolizes the virtues of patience, resilience and steadfast optimism about the future. This file is a wellspring of untapped possibilities, fostering an environment rich in creativity and innovation. By integrating the practice of maintaining a someday file into both personal and professional spheres, individuals and organizations can unlock transformative results, igniting fresh ideas, breakthrough solutions and a forward-thinking mindset that embraces limitless opportunities.

As a concept, the someday file transcends its role as a simple collection of

deferred thoughts. It stands as a strategic tool that stimulates innovation, encourages collaboration, improves decision-making and fuels organizational growth. By committing to the establishment and maintenance of a someday file, organizations and individuals not only safeguard potential solutions but cultivate a culture of continuous readiness and dynamic innovation. Incorporating this practice into daily routines ensures confidence in the face of future challenges, a reservoir of actionable ideas from which to draw and collective insight to realize those ideas. Start today, and embark on a journey toward transformational potential, for someday often arrives sooner than expected. **PSJ**

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