CURING MY CLOSET NIGHTMARE

How Disarray Can Plague a Darden Fashion Icon
Up Close: The Top Shelf

- Stacks of poorly folded clothing are falling over.
- No apparent grouping of like items.
- Completely unneeded items wasting space.
Up Close: Hanging Clothes

- Prime real estate at the front is wasted.
- Dress clothes crammed in the back getting wrinkled.
- Unused or infrequently used clothing wasting space.

- Shorts that I haven’t worn in 6 months.
- Impressive assortment of belts that I never wear.
- Football jersey (the season is over)
- That’s right, it’s a wool flannel shirt.
- Football jersey #2 (enough!)
- Dress clothes wedged against wall.
My Side of the Closet: The Floor

- Unused shelving system.
- Shoes, sandals, and slippers scattered everywhere.
- Clothes piled up in the front where frequently used items should be.

Closer inspection reveals that these are the only verifiable “pair” of shoes in the closet, and they aren’t even mine.

Not the same, but two sandals nonetheless.
THE SOLUTION: 5S TO THE RESCUE

Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize, Sustain
Set In Order: The Top Shelf

These two spots are reserved for a new process that I will discuss later.

Remaining waste due to a failure to get complete buy-in (this belongs to my wife).
Set In Order: Hanging Clothes

23 hangers allocated for each category

Belts mark the beginning of the Casual Section

Ties mark the beginning of the Business Section

Space reserved for a new process

A Items

B Items

Polo Shirts

Button-Down Shirts

Business Attire
Set In Order: The Floor

A Items

B Items

C Items
(Bottom row)
Standardization: Establishing a Process

- It was critical that I establish a standard for operating in and maintaining my closet.
- In the pursuit of this goal, I identified two new processes that I could implement in order to prevent common problems of the past.
- The two problems that I aimed to resolve were:
  - Persistent “stock-outs” of business attire and button-down shirts due to a failure to have them dry cleaned.
  - Persistent “stock-outs” of jeans due to a failure to launder them because they were balled up on the floor.
The lead time for dry cleaning is 3 days.

Given this lead time, and my demand for business attire and other button-down shirts, I determined that I could afford to wait until either 3 casual shirts or 3 business shirts needed dry cleaning.

Therefore, at the front of the closet, I placed three wire hangers for casual, and three plastic hangers for business.

Once an item of clothing is worn, I place it on the proper hanger to indicate that it needs dry cleaning. Once a set of 3 hangers is full, I take the shirts to the dry cleaner.

I placed this process at the front of the closet to facilitate visual management.
I aim to wear a pair of jeans twice before I clean them.

This was difficult to monitor under my old system because I would usually toss jeans on the floor when I was done with them.

This would result in either washing jeans too frequently (i.e. overproduction) or jeans not making it to the wash at all, causing a stock-out.

I created a process on the top shelf that forces me to manage my jean level.

The process consists of two stacks. One is for clean jeans, the other is for worn jeans. When I grab from the clean stack, I place the jeans back in the worn stack when I take them off.

When I grab from the worn stack, I know that I must place the jeans in the hamper when I take them off.
Since I am the only one that uses and replenishes my closet, it wasn’t necessary for me to implement labels and other indicators that anybody could understand. As long as I understand the indicators for where things go, the new system works.

For example:

- Wire hangers are for casual shirts
- Plastic hangers are for business attire
- The left stack of jeans is for worn jeans
- The belts indicate the beginning of the casual section
- The ties indicate the beginning of the business attire
- Frequently worn items are hung closer to the door.
- When 10 hangers are empty, it is time to do laundry.
However, establishing standard procedures for management and audits was very important.

The two processes I mentioned previously force me to manage my closet. Additionally, I set up a list of checks:

- Hanger count (weekly): Ensure that there are only 23 hanger since each section of the hanging clothes area. This will prevent me from building up excess clothing again.

- Weekly Tracker: On this tracker, I note any discrepancies in the quantity and/or location of clothing in my closet. I then analyze the cause of this discrepancy, and determine how to prevent it in the future, or perhaps I need to modify my standards (i.e. maybe I need more than 23 hangers for each section). I also track stock-outs to determine cause and whether or not I need to add to or decrease the size of the queue for dry cleaning.

- ABC restructuring (quarterly): Audit my ABC analysis and determine if adjustments need to be made based on season, style, etc.
Sustain: Maintaining the Super Closet

- The key to maintaining this new closet system has been the visual management that I built into the process:
  - Right when I walk into my closet, the dry cleaning queue is visible. It can’t be ignored.
  - The hangers work in the same manner. If I count 10 empty hangers, then I know it is time to do laundry.
  - Separating the clothing by type makes it quite apparent when something is in the wrong place (i.e. a polo shirt in the middle of dress shirts).

- The difficulty is in having the discipline to do this every day. My weekly checks help to reinforce this. If I notice there are several discrepancies on my weekly tracker, it serves as an indication that my daily management is likely lacking.

- Sustainment in the long term will be the most difficult because it requires my system to be flexible. Suitable locations for certain items of clothing will change throughout the year. It will be a challenge to stay motivated enough to conduct quarterly ABC audits in order to match my closet system design to my needs at a given point in time.
Results

- Removal of 35 pieces of clothing, reducing inventory by almost 40%
- 100% reduction in stock-outs. I have not run out of jeans or dry cleaned shirts since I implemented my new process.
- I’ve found that am I actually doing less laundry. Before, I would do half loads because I didn’t know where a lot of my clothing was at, or if it even needed to be washed. I don’t have enough data yet to quantify this improvement.
- 75% increase in efficiency.
  - Average time it took to find a matching pair of shoes, and a suitable shirt to wear was around 2 minutes.
  - Now that I know exactly where everything is, this time is down to around 30 seconds.
- 100% increase in praise from my wife regarding my closet space.