

Organizing Your Home Office

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The number one area where people who work from home experience the most trouble is in keeping their work area organized and ready for work. There are a lot of disadvantages to having a disorganized work space. A lot of clutter will actually lead to problems with your outlook; most of us find that having a messy work area brings about negative feelings that adversely affect our energy levels. Not keeping your office organized will mean that sooner or later, you will have to take a few hours to fix what could have been prevented with just a few seconds of foresight. Finally, having a messy area means that you run the risk of losing important information and might have to embarrass yourself by asking a client to send you over some more copies. In order to make your work day as efficient as possible, we have provided a few thoughts on how to keep your work space organized.

Don't Skimp On Space

Having a lot of room to work is a big part of making sure that you keep your work day organized. Think big: have a spacious home office, and a large desk on which to work. I have found that the best home office desks are the L-shaped design, where you can keep your computer on one part and have access to office supplies on the other. Make sure to utilize all of your space; fill all of your drawers with specific items and incorporate bookshelves and filing cabinets. Even if they look relatively empty, having these extra spots for storage means that you have a lot more opportunity to compartmentalize your activities.

Always Make Hard Copies

Paper seems to be the antithesis to an organized work area, but it is important that you do not rely on your computer or even saved disks alone when it comes to records or financial work. Paper isn't the bad guy; it is the lack of organization that is. File away any printed copies of work or records that you make right away, and you will find that you have the backup you need in an emergency without a mess.

Use Your Walls

Walls are often overlooked as important areas in offices. Your walls should be covered in bulletin boards and calendars that remind you of important events, deadlines, and meetings. The best kind of calendar, I have found, is the wall type that can be erased and rewritten with markers. These calendars can be changed every month and do not make a lot of extra paper to get rid of. The last thing you should do before leaving the office every night is to go over your bulletin boards and remove any items that have been taken care of during the course of your day.

Waste

Waste tends to accumulate in any office, and the home office is especially prone to attracting great piles of garbage. Keep your wastebasket and your recycling boxes close to your desk so that you can reach them while you are sitting down, and empty them out at least once a week. If you tend to eat take your meals with you when you work, don't let the glasses, dishes, and cans stack up. Put them away the first time you get up after you finish eating or drinking.

A Place For Everything

Always put similar items together; pens and pencils should go in the same drawer, paper for your printer should always be close to the printer and it should be easy to see how much you have left for inventory purposes. Always file your paperwork in the appropriate spot; receipts for tax purposes in one spot, hard copy of agreements in another. Try to separate all the work you do by the client or the customer so that it is all available quickly when you communicate with them.

Above all, make sure that your office space is off limits to other members of your family. Thousands of work-from-home entrepreneurs have lost valuable information when their computer was used by other family members who accidentally erased important information. It is likely that you have your own unique filing system, so even those who mean well should be encouraged not to touch your stuff. The best way of keeping those with good intentions away, of course, is to have your space well organized in the first place.