

Your New Office....at Home

Are there any guarantees in life besides death and taxes? With so much emotional and financial upheaval happening globally many are beginning to seek a new life perspective. The work force is becoming smaller as more and more people are laid off, taking furloughs and even taking on more freelance work to boost needed income. The office workplace is now the “home” office. With increased pressure to perform with fresh ideas in a new environment, changes to the existing office systems and office surroundings are essential.

My professional organizing experience of 11 years has taught that the business of running your home and the business of running your business requires that they be separated. However, this may not always be simple and creative concepts are needed so that both areas of life no longer co-mingle. Finding separate workstations may not be practical, but there are several practical ways one can achieve a workable relationship between home and business documents. There are several questions you may need to ask yourself first before starting on this new journey of setting up a new and effective working environment.

- Where should my office be? Where you set-up your office should be your number one priority. Most of us relegate our offices to some out of the way dungeon-like room. Even if you have to re-think that walk-in or hallway closet, get creative and find a space that is user-friendly and one that will keep you there instead of dreading your return. If you work better with lots of activity around you, then you may want your office in a den or active family area. If you need silence and require solitude to think, that spare bedroom may be better suited.
- What type of desk or work surface do I need? Improper desk surfaces can sabotage the most creative of thinkers. Piles of papers on the floor,

crammed filing cabinets and last months mail that lay buried under yesterdays newspaper causes an overwhelmed paralyzed feeling. Your workspace area needs to be large enough to tackle your day-to-day paper tasks. One of the brightest designs for obtaining more lateral office counter space is the “L” shaped desk surface. This design not only allows for multi-tasking desk options, but it can also allow for a two-person area.

This can also address that need to keep business and personal documents separated. Don't forget to look up. It amazes me how underutilized the wall space in most of my clients homes are when it comes to office storage. Wall shelving around the room can increase needed storage space. Files that hold current pertinent documents can be adhered to the wall as well. There are so many creative and imaginative design options now in our office supplies stores. Spend an hour in an office store before purchasing what you think you want and you'll come up with new and inventive storage solutions by looking at your walls.

- What type of lighting do I need? Another major priority is good task lighting. Dull-eye-squinting lighting is a sure way to sabotage your best efforts in your office space. The same is true with direct- full-sun daylight lighting. Take time to tweak and update your lighting essentials. Your best work will shine with lighting that is suited for your tasks. While I'm on the subject of lighting, did you know that if every household exchanges just one CFL (compact florescent light) from an incandescent light bulb in their home they will save \$30.00 over the life of the bulb? Not only that, but it will require 75% less electricity and 450 pounds of greenhouse gas will be saved. Now is the BEST time to re-educate yourself with the myriad of CFL lighting options out there that are not only way better for your office needs, but they are way better for the planet.
- Here's a question I always get from my clients: How much equipment do I

need.... how much space for a computer, phone, fax, printer, or scanner? The answer lies in how you conduct your business. More than equipment purchase, a better-organized office will allow you do to more, save time and save money. There are small, simple and regular steps you can take to increase your level of organization. Keeping organization your focus, rather than on what type of equipment to buy will make you feel far happier than all those bells and whistle products on the market.

To get that organized space, understand that it will take discipline, skill, commitment and most of all, maintenance.

These simple steps will assist you to begin your office organization journey:

- 1. Dedicate ten minutes per day** to de-cluttering. I suggest that you use a timer. Most people have no idea of how much can be accomplished in just 10minutes. Schedule your session in as you would any other appointment. Use the time to remove anything that doesn't live in your office and remove anything from your desk that doesn't belong there. Most of all, to keep your space organized it requires maintenance. Ten minutes a day doesn't sound so scary does it?
- 2. Keep a bin where you open the mail** and immediately discard irrelevant paperwork. Try it and see how much better you feel when unnecessary things don't even make it onto your desk. In your office, make sure the bin is large enough to fit your papers.
- 3. Know how long you need to keep each document.** Every document has a life span, whether it's a post it note with a five minute life span or its tax related, Each document needs an appropriate home for the duration of its life. Know what you need to keep, what you can archive or throw and when you can do it. You can Google "paper retention" and find information to help you with your questions.
- 4. Keep archive or older files away from active or 'to do' files.** Prime access

files ought to be literally within arms' length. Don't keep dead files there. Things you use daily stay close to you, weekly a little further away, monthly even further; for less frequently accessed items, consider storing them outside the office area altogether.

5. Make friends with your office. Set it up so you love going into it. Having systems that suit your needs will be a big part of this. You can use colors and furnishings that make you feel good but stay mindful of your office's purpose. Take a look at your office chair. Is it time to replace?

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Lastly, that 1 million dollar question...who gets to invade your office area? In setting up your new systems, remember to communicate to each family member why you are doing what you are doing. Explain the need to have set solo time in the space and be flexible to understand family needs as well. Communication is the key for productive and cooperative harmony in your new office space.

Eileen Koff~ Certified Professional Organizer® of To The Next Level, is located in Stony Brook NY. As a Professional Organizer, Eileen assists individuals and businesses to achieve their goals by being better organized. When you are organized you can achieve anything.