

10 Quick Tips for Organizing Your Office!!

By Betsy Fein, President of Clutterbusters!!

Recent statistics reveal that the average executive wastes 150 hours per year searching for lost documents. One in 20 documents is lost and never recovered.

Whether it is at home or at your office your desk is the hub of your daily activities. But it also becomes a dumping ground as well. Littered with all kinds of paper, mementos and personal items, it resembles chaos, not order. Here are 10 tips to help you organize your office!!

1. Everything needs a place. As you clean out your office and deal with future paperwork, consider the mantra -- everything needs a place. Remember the mnemonic "RAT" (so you won't be a Pack RAT) to each piece of paper that crosses your desk. That is, you should decide to Retain it, Act on it or Toss it.

These same rules apply to e-mails and electronic files. Your computer desktop is not the place for documents to be floating around; they belong in files. As e-mails come in, you should delete them, file them, or read them and reply immediately.

2. Round up the right tools. It is essential that you clear your office of piles and put all documents in an upright position so that you can quickly locate them without digging. Whether you use filing cabinets, filing crates or filing boxes is a personal choice. Just make sure you have some sort of filing system.

You'll want to lay out your space so that the files you use most can be stored close to your desk, while the files you access less frequently can be stored farther away. If you don't have a lot of space, you can store the files that you almost never need, such as old tax documents, in another room entirely.

3. Say no to paper. Only print out paperwork if it's completely necessary. If you do print something out, recycle it once you've completed the task you used it for.

Kick Post-Its to the curb. Post-its look messy and are easy to lose track of. Keep a notebook on your desk, next to your keyboard instead, and get in the habit of using it. If you use it every day, you're bound to see your reminders written down

Display your photos on your computer. Nix the family photo frames, and opt instead for a rotating slideshow of personal photographs on your computer, or choose your favorite photo to use on your desktop background. Frames just add clutter, which we're trying to lose here.

4. Keep or delete? If you use something every day leave it in your desk; if you use something once a week, you should be able to reach it from your chair; if you use something once a month keep it in your office or work area. If you use something less than once a month, keep it elsewhere.

5. Keep your office supplies in one drawer. Keep only the supplies you use frequently in your desk. Do you really need 25 pens and 15 packages of salt?

6. Move electronics out of sight. Your cable modem, wireless router, firewall, battery backup, etc. shouldn't be on your desk. Even if you have enough room, it introduces visual clutter.

7. Organize those wires. It is easy to have half your desk covered with wires for various pieces of electronics. Moving some stuff off your desk can help. Some pieces of Velcro wrapped around wires can go a long ways toward cleaning things up. Also make sure that you have wires that are long enough to tuck out of the way. If they are too short you won't be able to arrange them neatly.

8. Get rid of Junk Mail. To rid your mailbox of general junk mail, contact the Direct Marketing Association (DMA). The Association also provides an E-Mail Preference Service, which may help reduce unsolicited commercial e-mail ("spam"). To add your name to the Mail Preference Service list and reduce the amount of "junk" mail you receive, you can register online at <http://www.dmachoice.org>

9. Think of your office as... your kitchen. Once your office is organized, you'll want to keep it that way. A major part of maintaining order is the way you approach the task. Most people have the skills needed, as evidenced by the way they handle their kitchens. People generally have very clean kitchens and offices are really no different. Food rots so you clean it up and you wipe your counters. If you can use those same skills that you already have in your office, then you'll maintain it.

To prevent future paper accumulation, treat the paper in your office as if it's perishable. Don't pile it up, telling yourself that you'll deal with it when you have time. You wouldn't do that with food in your kitchen. Make decisions on the paper immediately. Keep a recycle bin and a wastebasket next to your desk and use them frequently.

10. Look around. End each day (or at least each week) by tidying up your desk and returning everything to its place. (Yes, everything should have a place.)



Betsy Fein is the owner of Clutterbusters!! a professional organizing company with locations in DC, MD, VA and FL. Betsy is a recognized expert in professional organizing, and the company is one of the few to achieve the Golden Circle Award from the National Association of Professional Organizers. Clutterbusters!! has also been certified by the Women's Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC).

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