

# organize today!

Ideas and tips to help you live  
an organized, simpler life at work and home

Winter 2008

## Organize Your Office

In the old days, offices used to be standard-issue, one-size-fits-all spaces. They traditionally had a large desk, a filing cabinet, and — such luxury — a door to close for a little peace and quiet.

Fast-forward to today. Offices now come in a variety of shapes and sizes. From the standard-issued, privacy-lacking cube office to the increasingly popular home office to the space-challenged mobile office, each presents its own unique organizational challenges.

This issue of *Organize Today* will offer some tips and tricks to help you get your space, supplies, and work life under control no matter if you're an executive on the top floor or a sales guru working out of your sedan.

## The benefits of being organized at work



The average desk worker has 36 hours of work on his or her desk and spends three hours per week sorting piles trying to find the project to work on next.<sup>1</sup> Sound familiar? If you're struggling through mountains of desk clutter, realize that by becoming more organized, you'll not only help your business run better, but you'll reap multiple personal rewards as well.

You'll increase productivity once you have an organized and efficient schedule to keep you on track. You'll be amazed at how much you get done in shorter amounts of time. And by focusing on your priorities and goals, you'll be able to finally move ahead toward reaching them. But the benefits don't stop there.

Once you're organized, you'll have a positive self-image and ditch the shame. Your organized office will allow you to present a professional image to coworkers, clients, and superiors. A clutter-free environment is also easier to manage. Your stress level will decrease dramatically. When you can find what you need, are on top of your to-dos, and arrive on time, you'll feel calmer and have more peace of mind. No more feeling overwhelmed by life — you'll be the one in control. You'll also discover more time for yourself. When you're organized, your days go as planned, and you get a lot done. That leaves more time to indulge in a little "me time." Now doesn't that sound nice?

<sup>1</sup>"The Overload Syndrome" by Richard Swenson

# The essential office

The average office worker spends 2000 hours per year at her desk. This space can either be a stressful, headache-inducing mess or a pleasant, easy-to-maintain oasis. Use these tips to create a blissfully organized office.

**MANAGE PAPERS DAILY.** Keep papers under control by dealing with paperwork on a regular basis. Whether first thing in the morning, at the end of the day, or somewhere in between, set aside 30 minutes each day so you don't end up with overwhelming piles. For every piece of paper that you encounter, make an immediate decision to either toss it, file it, or act on it.

**TOSS A LOT.** Eighty percent of what we file is never looked at again. Keep only the papers you *truly* need.

**FILE REGULARLY.** Make time each day to file your "keepers." Although not your favorite task, filing as you go will probably take only a few minutes and will make your office life much less stressful and more productive.

**CREATE ACTION FILES.** If you can't act on smaller tasks right away, keep them in a "quick-task to-do" file, and work on them regularly so they don't pile up. For larger, long-term projects, put each into a separate file folder. Chunk each project into bite-size pieces. Draft a timeline with deadlines, and attach it to the inside front cover of the file.

## KEEP KEY THINGS CLOSE.

Gather items that you use most frequently, and store them within easy reach of your usual seated position. Items that you use less frequently can be placed outside this area, but should still be easily accessible. For things you rarely use, consider getting rid of them, storing them outside your office, or stashing them further away from your desk, saving your "prime real estate" for the most-used supplies.

## CORRAL PERIODICALS.

Magazine files will neatly hold newsletters or trade periodicals, making for easy reference and reduced desk clutter.



**USE BINDERS.** These 3-ring helpers are perfect for filing things you reference frequently because they're easy to locate and page through, they hold a large volume of papers, and they are easy to maintain.

**LABEL IT.** Use a dark marker or label maker to label all file folders and binders. This makes the process of "putting away" and retrieval so much easier.



**TIDY UP.** At the end of every day, clear your desktop, review tomorrow's schedule, and update your to-do list. Tomorrow is sure to be a success!

# Home office tips

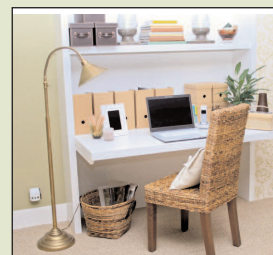
A day working from your home office can be filled with interruptions from spouses, kids, or unexpected visitors. To maximize your time, consider these tips:

- Establish regular office hours and make sure everyone knows and respects them. If necessary, find quiet time by getting up early or staying up late.

- For parents working at home with small children, utilize nap time for peak work hours. Set aside a bucket of special toys to be taken out only when you're on the phone and need extra special quiet. Establish regular childcare as needed, and don't forget to create a back-up plan for school vacations or sick days.

- Resist the urge to continually check email or voice mail. Ignore the doorbell. Use caller ID to direct your energies toward work-related calls, rather than chatty friends and pesky telemarketers.

- Make a to-do list at the beginning of each day or the evening before. Schedule your time so the most important tasks get done first. That way, if you do get interrupted, at least your most urgent tasks have been completed.



# Your mobile office, on-the-go and organized

In the “old days,” people used their cars simply to get from Point A to Point B. But today, vehicles often function as a mobile office. If you work out of your car, consider these tips to maximize your space and maintain organization.



**CONSIDER SOME SPECIALTY CAR ORGANIZERS.** Discount stores offer a variety of them, such as back-of-the-seat organizers, visor

organizers for CDs, and auto tray tables. Front-seat mobile office organizers are also available, such as this one from Case Logic.<sup>®</sup>

**GET PAPERS UNDER CONTROL BY CREATING AN ON-THE-GO FILING SYSTEM.** Whether you office out of your car or just need to have lots of information at your fingertips, create a simple filing system. Your local office supply store has a variety of portable, lidded file boxes, or use a simple plastic crate. Label hanging file folders with broad categories, and slide important papers in the correct spots.

**STOCK A SMALLER, LIDDED BOX OR ZIPPERED CASE WITH ESSENTIAL OFFICE SUPPLIES.** Include pens, sticky notes, paper, note cards, envelopes, and stamps. Don't forget business cards, brochures, and any other company literature. Or keep an empty cup in one of the cup holders for pens and pencils.

**DEDICATE AN ENVELOPE TO HOLD BUSINESS-RELATED RECEIPTS.** Empty it out once each week. Don't forget to keep a mileage log tucked into your visor or door pocket if you need to track miles.

**MAKE SURE YOU DON'T FORGET BRILLIANT IDEAS.** Stash small hard-cover notebook to catch those moments. Or, to keep your eyes on the road, tote a mini-recorder or call your voice mail and leave reminders there.

**TOSS IT OUT AND TIDY UP.** Keep a nylon or plastic garbage bag in the car so messes get cleaned up as you go. Take five minutes at the end of each day to empty the bag and tidy up the entire vehicle. This small investment of time will prevent the need for a longer clean-up later.

## An organized cubicle

Smaller spaces — like the office cubicle — have their own unique organizational challenges. In fact, more than 59% of Americans say their messy cubicles affect their work.<sup>1</sup> If you'd like to get your cube under control, try these tips to maximize your small space.

**USE VERTICAL SPACE.** Don't rely solely on horizontal (flat) desk surfaces for storage. Office supply stores and catalogs offer a variety of organization products to maximize wall space. Look for basket ladders that hook over cube walls to act as “in” and “out” boxes or to hold current projects or literature.

**MINIMIZE VISUAL CLUTTER.** Smaller spaces look larger when clutter is kept to a minimum. Keep project papers tucked away in file folders. Utilize storage

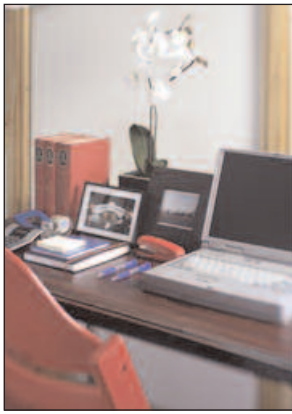
boxes in a variety of sizes to store media and office supplies. If you have a bulletin board, empty it completely and return only those things that you truly love or need.

**MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS.**

If possible, face your computer or most-used work surface away from the doorway so you're not constantly interrupted by the flow of office traffic. Consider putting up a “do not disturb” sign outside your doorway letting office mates know when you need privacy during peak production hours.



<sup>1</sup> International Facility Management Association Space and Project Management Benchmarks



## Make your office space your own

**MAKE IT PERSONAL.** You're in your office for nearly a third of your day. Add personal touches to make it a fun space. Include a few great and meaningful photos. Add artwork to the walls —

whether expensive originals or a child's framed finger paintings. And add a little greenery in the form of a potted plant or fresh flowers. Remember that your office is a reflection of you, so keep it tasteful and simple, and, of course, organized!

**HAVE FUN WITH DESK ACCESSORIES.** Think outside the office supply catalog. Even if you have to pay for them yourself, a few beautiful, useful office

supplies may make your day more enjoyable. From a high-quality pen to colorful binders and file folders, functionality can be fun. A rubber band ball, funky, patterned clipboard, or vintage wire desk tray will make office drudgery a thing of the past. Some online resources for unique organization supplies include [www.seejanetwork.com](http://www.seejanetwork.com) and [www.russellandhazel.com](http://www.russellandhazel.com). Also try [www.containerstore.com](http://www.containerstore.com) for a wide variety of products.

**PLEASE ALL YOUR SENSES.** Introduce sound by playing some soft music. Delight your nose by spritzing cotton balls with an energizing essential oil like orange or peppermint and placing them in your drawers. Indulge your taste buds by filling a candy bowl with your favorite treats. Your days are sure to be more pleasant when your office looks, smells, and sounds nice.



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