

QUICK TIPS – *Organizing Your Office*

Look around your office.

Is it orderly and unobstructed or is it inhabited by the remnants of old activities and well-intentioned future ones? Is your desk neat and visible or is it submerged, having lost the war to papers, files and a variety of other things?

In many ways, your office represents your state of mind. If it is cluttered and disorganized, that messiness is causing you to experience low-level stress.

Here are three steps to help you gain better control of your working environment and the good news is that this approach will save you time, while also increasing your overall effectiveness.

Get Rid Of The Clutter

Remove, store or file non-essential files and papers. Keep readily accessible only those things that are current. For everything else, you need to find them a new home. Box up old files and records, and store them outside of your office.

Get rid of all that *stuff* that you've been diligently collecting like an aficionado.

For instance, the foot-high stack of journals, articles and newsletter that you've been meaning to read has built up over a period of time. If you haven't read them by now, it's reasonable to assume that they're not about to be read. Keeping them around is really an unconscious message to you and others. It's screaming either – “*Look how busy I am*” or “*Look how disorganized I am*”. Best just to grab the recycle box and throw out all that *stuff*!

Clear Your Desk

Your desk is a work area, not a storage space.

Only things pertinent to your desk should reside on your desk. Look with fresh eyes at what has collected there. Put away as much as you can in drawers, cabinets or on a shelf. Be *Spartan* and economical in both look and function.

A clear desk obviously has fewer distractions and this helps one focus on the immediate task. In addition, a clear desk and an organized office make the retrieval of files and documents more efficient, much quicker and less frustrating.



Start and end every day with a clear, neat desk that is devoid of anything that doesn't belong there. This is akin to *office hygiene* and needs to become part of your daily routine.

Handle Papers Once

Papers have a unique way of effortlessly growing into small mountains that require unnecessary, secondary work. **Prevention** is the best way to deal with this *Paper Mountain*. The key to success is to handle papers only once, whenever possible.

For instance, if you return from a meeting and off-load onto your desk papers, records and expense receipts, then you will have to sort and deal with them, at a later date. Inadvertently, you have added an entire extra step to the process.

You can eliminate this step by immediately filing your papers and records, and annotating your receipts before you put them in a separate file for month-end processing of your expense claim. This is similar to "*cleaning as you go*", when cooking.

By organizing your office, maintaining a clear desk and handling papers only once, you will infuse your working environment with order and professionalism, resulting in reduced low-level stress and improved productivity.

