

# Hoarders in the Office? Address the Mess

Hoarding may get your employees a spot on reality TV, but they need to know it could damage their image—and hurt their chances at a promotion.

More than eight in 10 HR professionals (83%) say the appearance of an employee's workspace at least somewhat affects the perception of that person's professionalism, says an OfficeTeam [survey](#). Plus, 28% of employers say they'd be less likely to promote someone who has a disorganized or messy workspace, says a CareerBuilder [survey](#).



As OfficeTeam's director, Robert Hosking, put it, "A tidy desk won't necessarily boost your career, but a messy one can leave a bad impression on colleagues."

That's not good news for the 38% of U.S. workers who say that between 50% and 100% of their desk surface is currently covered with work or other materials. A full one-third of workers admit that they tend to be hoarders at work (evenly balanced between men and women).

Hoarding-related TV shows like [Hoarding: Buried Alive](#) have shined a spotlight on this phenomenon. But there's a big difference between being a clinical hoarder versus simply having a messy desk or being a "pack rat."

As psychologist David Tolin, Ph.D., writes on WebMD, about 2% to 5% of Americans may meet the criteria for being hoarders. Experts usually draw a line between a merely messy lifestyle and hoarding "when it comes to the person's ability to function ... Lots of people may acquire things they don't need, but if it's not the sort of thing that causes an inability to function adequately, we don't call it hoarding."

If your employees (or you) are organizationally challenged, heed these tips from CareerBuilder and OfficeTeam:

- Set a calendar reminder for Friday afternoon to take completed projects to the recycle bin.
- Work on one project at a time. While you may have 20 things on your "to do" list, prioritize what needs to be done that day when you arrive.
- Don't be a digital hoarder. Just because nobody else can see your clutter, doesn't mean it doesn't exist, especially in your email boxes. Delete unneeded emails on a weekly basis.
- Sit in your visitor chair to get a perspective on what others see when entering your cubicle or office. Clean your workspace so it's visually appealing.
- Establish an organization system that suits your style. File, don't pile.
- Don't touch the same piece of paper more than once without filing, recycling or tossing it, or passing it along to the next person.

- Print documents only when necessary. Use electronic calendars, task lists or e-mail alerts to remember deadlines and meetings.
- Take a few minutes before leaving to clear your workspace. At the end of each day, prioritize the tasks on your to-do list for the next day.

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