

Clear the clutter! Tips to organize your desk

When your co-workers and leaders see your desk filled with clutter and screaming of chaos, they do NOT think you're doing a great job of getting everything done. Likely their takeaway from your messy desk is that you're overwhelmed, disorganized, your systems are lacking or failing, and you're probably not very efficient. That's right, stacking loads of paper and other items on your desk doesn't say, "I'm really busy and important"; it says just the opposite.

A well-organized, tidy and sleek workspace will not only change the perception of your peers, it will actually help you work better and feel more productive throughout your busy day. It will help you center your physical space, and that will help your body and mind do the same thing. It will allow you to accomplish your tasks quickly and to manage a heavy workload without spending valuable time rummaging through huge stacks of paper.

Start by cleaning house

The first thing you need to do to organize your desk is clean house! Do you have a lot of old junk that you've kept in a drawer? Do you have items you haven't used in years? Get rid of the junk! It's taking up valuable space that you could be using to be more organized and more efficient. Go through everything in your workspace. If you no longer need it, it's broken, or it's unimportant—consider moving it to the "round file"! What's that, you might wonder? It's your trashcan: an all-important file you should be using! You want your desk to be a place of action, not simply storage space.

Organize your desk by clusters

One of the best techniques for organizing your workspace and becoming a more efficient person is to utilize the clustering method for items and tasks. This method encourages you to group items or tasks frequently used or performed together. As you're reorganizing your desk, make sure you're using all the space available to you, including every inch of space in your drawers! Take advantage of the space while you're determining which items should be placed where. You could utilize an entire drawer for your pens, post-it notes, envelopes and notepads. Using the same method, you can also group common tasks together in order to better maintain focus throughout your day.

Prioritize to-do tasks

The next step to organizing your workspace is creating and using a desktop "to-do" tray. This will help you prioritize your day as it evolves and to quickly shift gears, if needed. Having a visual reminder of what still needs to be done is a fabulous motivator! Watching that tray become emptier and emptier as you expertly navigate your busy day is a great reward.

Finally, make sure you handle each piece of paper that comes across your desk, or email in your inbox, only once. Don't add extra items to your daily list by not completing every element of a task, doing the wrong task or otherwise messing up. Read your assignments carefully. Make sure you understand exactly what needs to be done. Then, fully complete the task.