

Working Solutions

Organizing the Home Office: Finding the Right Furniture

Home office furniture options vary from large to small, portable to permanent, lightweight to heavy duty and reliable to "you get what you pay for." Before you rush to furnish your new office or refurbish an existing one, consider a few questions.

Do You Want Or Need New Furniture?

Is your existing furniture fitting your needs? Do you have enough drawer space or filing space? If what you are using isn't necessarily stylish or appealing, yet functional, then stick with what you have until you absolutely can't stand it anymore. The main difference between wanting and needing furniture could mean the difference between upgrading your computer, fax or other equipment and having a nice looking office. Determine your priorities and needs, then decide if you need new furniture now or if you can postpone a furniture purchase for a while.

Have You Measured Twice, To Buy Once?

Before you head out the door to buy new furniture, measure your home office and determine what size and how much furniture it can hold. You may find the perfect desk, computer hutch or credenza, yet if the pieces are too big, your office may look more like a furniture store than an office.

You'll spend more time bumping into your desk and other office furniture, instead of working. Bring a tape measure and your office measurements with you when you shop and there will be no question that what you buy will fit inside your home office.

What Are Your Furniture Needs?

Take a close look at the furniture you already own and determine what's missing.



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(Continued on the next page.)

Do you have enough filing space, drawer space, writing surface or room for your computer, printer, modem, fax, etc.? There is nothing wrong with improving the look of your office, so long as it will help you improve your productivity. If you're a pack rat, avoid a desk with more than two drawers. You'll only give yourself more places to stash items you don't need to keep. Is your computer equipment stuck in a corner of your office, perched between an old kitchen table and a well-worn coffee table? Look for a computer stand with a hutch to hold all of your equipment and still leave you with surface room for writing or placing information before you enter it on your computer. Other options are a configuration that includes a desk, credenza and computer stand, or a desk with a return placed near a computer stand.

What Can You Afford?

Another factor to consider before you leave home is your current budget. You don't have to pay a fortune to furnish your office, but decide in advance if saving money is worth the aggravation and time spent fixing loose drawers, wobbly legs and unhinged cabinets. Remember the saying "You get what you pay for" and look for the best price, but don't forget quality. Look carefully at the floor models of the furniture you have in mind to see if they look worn or tattered. If so, you can bet that eventually the furniture will look the same way in your home office.

Is The Furniture Easy To Assemble?

You shouldn't have to be Bob Villa to assemble office furniture. Make sure that any furniture you buy has clear instructions. Look at the directions before you leave the store and don't be afraid to ask the salesperson for help if you don't understand the instructions. You may consider paying someone to put the furniture together. It all depends upon what your time and the ability to avoid frustration are worth to you.

Will Clients See Your Home Office?

If you will be the only one using and visiting your home office, don't waste valuable dollars on the latest furniture. Instead look for durability and reliability. Your furniture still can look good, but if you have a choice between an expensive piece

and a reliable one, go for reliability. Also, don't feel pressured to replace existing furniture or completely furnish a new office. If money is tight, buy office furniture piece by piece as you can afford it, or gradually upgrade what you own. If you plan to invite clients to your home office, spend more money on higher-quality furnishings. Your office is a reflection of your business and a poorly furnished office sends an unprofessional message.

Does The Furniture Need To Be Portable?

Is your home office dedicated to being a home office or is it part of a guestroom or the family room? If you don't have to worry about being kicked out of your home office, then portability is not an issue. If on the other hand, each time your relatives visit, your office (and home) turns into a bed and breakfast, you'll need and probably want to put your equipment and files away, out of the reach of others. Various furniture manufacturers make cabinets with doors that close to conceal a writing surface, computer equipment and files. Also there are rolling computer carts that are easy to move when necessary and a few carts feature locks to protect your equipment and files. If you are going to move your furniture often, test each piece to make sure that it can be moved without falling apart.

The beauty of a home office is that it doesn't have to look like a corporate office with a huge oak desk and wall-to-wall filing cabinets. Instead your home office can reflect your personality and perhaps in the beginning, your budget. Finding the right office furniture involves knowing what you want, what you need and what you can afford. ■Source Home office expert Lisa Kanarek: [LifeLines](#) by Workplace Options, Fall 2005



Get an “Accountability Partner”

Try enlisting the help of a friend or colleague who won't let you off the hook in your commitment to achievement, an “accountability partner.” Whether it's getting to the gym, getting started on writing that

book, saving more money, or taking more time to relax, an accountability partner won't take "no" or "maybe later" for an answer. You agree, up front, to have them hold your feet to the fire and insist that you follow through with the plan to reach your goal. Usually a friend or colleague works with you in this "tough love" partnership. Most of us will accomplish goals we set for ourselves when we can't escape responsibility to account for our actions. An accountability partner closes off the escape routes and the excuses! ■

Online Caregiver Forums: When You Can't Be There

Like so many other caregivers, you don't have a lot of free time. A support group could be a good thing to take advantage of to help you manage stress and solve common problems, but is there an alternative? Indeed! The message boards and community forums on association Web sites will support and give you advice for specific problems. At www.alz.org, for example, an endless variety of subjects are discussed. Peers who struggle with everything from time management to medication post responses. Suddenly, you're not alone. Instead, others facing the same stressful issues surround you. ■



Exercise to Keep Your Memory Strong

Frustrated at your inability to remember things? Perhaps the problem is a lack of exercise. Yale researchers who've studied the effects of exercise on mice, now report that the findings might have strong implications for humans. The research suggests that for younger and middle-aged persons, exercise is crucial in helping to maintain good short-term memory function. Exercise combined with mental stimulation appears to be important for older persons. As physical ability diminishes with age, mental exercise begins to play a larger role in helping to retain memory. ■ *Source: American Psychological Association. Press Release. August 5, 2007*



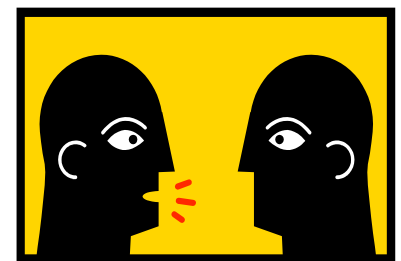
First, Burn Your To-Do List

You might be great at keeping to-do lists and crossing through all those objectives that you accomplish. But are you frustrated that this exercise has not coincided with accomplishing the goals that you are most passionate about in your life? The more you do, the more it seems needs to be done. Productivity experts say this problem relates to a lack of focus, or at least a lack of the grander focus. You are looking at the trees instead of the forest. First, decide what goals you want to accomplish. Where do you want to be months from now, or by next year at this time? Next, decide what directly relates to accomplishing these goals. Stay in this frame of mind when you create, manage, and make decisions with a to-do list. This is also called "clarity of purpose." Once you have it, you ignore small stuff that eats away at your time, and make greater leaps forward with your goals. ■

Are They Talking About You?

Harris Interactive surveyed the biggest pet peeves of employees while in the office. In order of most objectionable to least, they included:

- 1) Condescending tones;
 - 2) Public reprimands;
 - 3) Micromanaged work projects;
 - 4) Loud talkers;
 - 5) Ringing cell phones;
 - 6) Use of speaker phones in public areas;
 - 7) Coworkers who engage in conversations that are too personal; and
 - 8) Use of PDAs at meetings.
- What behavior do most workers find unacceptable among peers? Answer: 91 percent say profanity is the most unacceptable. ■ *Source: Randstad Work Solutions, In the News www.us.randstad.com/about*



Tips for Traveling Employees or Temporary Assignments

If you are an employee who frequently travels for work, you can have it all: friends and customers in distant places, new worlds to explore, an ever changing routine, and maybe even higher pay. But plan ahead because traveling can also be a source of stress if you don't rely upon a few important personal skills. Stressors may include: challenging jobs having to adapt constantly to new conditions and the feeling of being left entirely to your own resources. To successfully navigate the road less traveled, remember the following advice: 1) Be flexible. Flexibility enables you to cope with the unexpected and adapt to constant change, including new environments, policies and procedures, cultures, and workflow rates; 2) Be assertive. Speak up for yourself when you accept assignments so that others know your position and your needs; 3) Be organized. Traveling to new locations frequently requires excellent organizational skills in order to manage paperwork, travel arrangements, and unpredictable interruptions; 4) Be ambitious. Activate your desire for a challenge and thrive on it. You might be expected to float, work rotating shifts, or take on other hard-to-fill positions within different work units or organizations. ■



who struggle with chronic short attention span, hyperactivity, distractibility, and impulsivity. Unfortunately, Adderall is rapidly gaining popularity with some students on college campuses who use the drug as an aid to cram for tests, and also by those who abuse the “benefits” of the drug, and use it to stay awake longer to party. Studies have demonstrated that college students abusing Adderall for non-medical purposes are more likely to use other drugs such as cocaine and alcohol. They are also more likely to have lower grades according to the University of Michigan Substance Abuse Research Center. Because of the speed-like effect when abused, a strong temptation to use the drug again as a rescue device or a way to improve one's mood is almost certain. If you are a parent with a college student, educate yourself about Adderall and the risks associated with abusing it. ■

Do You Listen to Customers Too Well?

If you are a good listener, you might notice that customers open up quickly to share their problems with you. This positive human quality can be a double edged sword if the result saps your energy, causes you to feel gloomy and sad, or robs you of what used to be a positive attitude. You don't have to change; just consider a few rules to lower your risk for compassion fatigue: limit the amount of time that you allow others to pour out their troubles; practice changing the topic to one that is more positive, and reduce the amount of feedback you give that leads to “too much” information. Don't feel bad for putting yourself first in these scenarios. It's okay to practice a little detachment. ■



Your EAP is designed to help you deal with life stresses and a variety of personal challenges. For confidential services offered at no cost to all employees and their families, please call:



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TDD (800) 448-1823
Teen Line (800) 334-8336 (TEEN)
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