



Accessorise

all areas

Desktop accessories help bring order to the workplace chaos, improving productivity and decreasing stress levels. However, with technology allowing workers to operate without the need for desktops, is the market for these products facing a slow demise?

Desktop Accessories

With so much of our lives spent at work, our desktops take on huge importance, both in terms of organisational efficiency and psychological wellbeing. A disorganized desktop resembles the chaotic world of magma and volcanic rock beneath the earth's crust, piles of paper sliding over and under one another – tectonic plates firing off occasional seismic waves of stress as you realize that, on top of the 100 other things you have to do in the next hour, you really have to get your desktop under control.

It is the judicious use of desktop accessories, those rigid, organising, calming presences like iron haired librarians with encyclopaedic knowledge of their book filled wards, that can bring calm to the limited work horizon of our day to day. It seems a straightforward and well worn remedy to office workers, and yet the average employee spends 400 hours per year searching for paper documents (source: Data Pro Gartner Group) which means office workers are spending a lot of time trying to find important information. Additionally, according to accountancy house, PWC, it has been estimated that professionals spend 50% of their time searching for important information.

“A clear and organised work space will not only lead to more efficiencies in the office/home office environment,” says Guy Costin, commercial market manager, Acco Brands, “but it also means that workers are less stressed as they will easily be able to locate important information.”

Besides stress levels and organisation, keeping your workplace safe and secure is better managed when order reigns.

“With a major focus for businesses being on data protection obligations and the ever increasing risk of ID fraud, a de-cluttered office/workspace will ensure that important information isn't left lying around when it should be destroyed,” says Jill Organ, commercial market manager, Acco Brands.

→ Changing workplace habits mean that the need for desktop accessories is being reassessed from new perspectives

However, despite all the excellent reasons for the continuing health of this product sector, changing workplace habits mean that the need for desktop accessories is being reassessed from new perspectives. Advances in technology mean that your desktop can be more easily managed electronically from your computer's actual desktop. An offshoot of these technological advances are the burgeoning percentage of 'teleworkers' in the UK, those free moving nomads always on the go, whose desktops are the hills and valleys, and accessories the stars.

Well, maybe not quite, but are manufacturers concerned by this potentially negative market trend? Durable's VP of marketing, Stewart Anderson says the growth trend in teleworking is not a threat to this product sector, focusing on the fact that a large proportion of teleworkers are homeworkers, where you will also find a desktop that needs organising. He also



cites the health of the sector as evidence of this, with research from several sources estimating that our consumption of paper in the UK is still rising by about 5% per year. Esselte's marketing manager, Juliet Tipton agrees, pointing out that a recent Esselte survey showed that, while 90% of the respondents were using some form of electronic filing, only 7.5% were electronically filing more than 50% of their paperwork.

"Most people still prefer paper copies of documents for reading and displaying frequently accessed information," adds Anderson. "This highlights the need for products to de-clutter workstations, enabling people to easily access information they need."

This new nomadic way of working is challenging and makes greater demands on anyone's organisational skills. Karen Couling, European product manager for Mobile Storage and Organisation, Acco Brands, says that their research into this market indicates that durability is key when it comes to products.

"Home workers don't want cheaper products that aren't up to the job," says Couling. "A typical comment is, 'Don't make products cheaper, make them more durable – we are prepared to pay the premium.'"

With comments like that from the end user, it must come as a relief to salespeople that this sector is not on the wane. Couling continues that the average home worker demands value for money. But that doesn't mean cheap. Value means a product that delivers, and a price that does not come at the expense of poor product performance. There is still the potential for high margin premium product sales to the home office market.

According to Tipton, key to maintaining the value in this sector is for, "manufacturers to continue to provide co-ordinating premium products that add value both to the office worker and to the reseller, who can make healthy margins. These products have to be fashionable, well designed and in modern colours with interesting shapes".

Shapes aside, what about solution selling? Anderson agrees that the trend in teleworking has bought about a solution sell style approach for the dealer salesperson. Therefore, dealer salespeople need to cover all angles when discussing a customer's needs. Ensure you address their work rate, security levels and also highlight how external order can bring inner peace (without lighting a joss stick). With a number of complete ranges of products available

from a number of different manufacturers, and with the home worker's penchant for style and coordination in their home environment, ensure you highlight how the various elements of any one range complements one another, and how, while their organisational needs might be met at their current workload, it's good to have space in lieu of a particularly stressful (or should that be successful?) month.

So is the future secure for this product sector, or can we expect technology to eventually consume this area into the less profitable world of cyber-organising? Anderson is optimistic, saying that while there will be some effect, it won't be substantial.

While electronic document management makes it easy to store and share information, people still prefer to print a copy from their nearest printer to read a document and work on it," he explains. "Also, while email has become the key method medium for business communication, it is still estimated that around 17% of incoming communications are on paper. Thus there is still a clear need and demand for desk accessories to de-clutter workspaces, and filing systems to keep information handy."

Reassured? Now go out there and get those sales. And don't forget that tectonic metaphor in the intro to this piece, could come in handy with visual, media types...●

→ TREND WATCH: RFID

"As businesses become more dependent on technology, desktop accessories that are PC connectable will continue to sell well. The focus of this market is likely to remain on products that improve efficiency rather than those that simply look good. RFID (radio-frequency identification) was hailed as the solution for keeping track of stock, but the tags can be easily damaged by abrasion or extreme temperatures. Some new printers will produce labels that have an RFID antenna encased in ultra durable TZ tape to give retailers and manufacturers added peace of mind."

Mike Kelly, general manager for label printing, Brother UK

