

BELOW THE SURFACE

The desktop accessories sector is on the move.

Like so many other sectors within the office products market, the desk accessories sector is on the move. This is not only due to changes in the way in which we work while we are sat at our desks, but also our changing work practices.

There is a convergence happening between work and our home and personal life.

To explain: added to the pressures of full time working, many of us also run homes, bring up children and have other responsibilities. This increases pressure even further and many of us have started to look for smarter, more flexible ways of working. Some of us now have home offices and split our time between there and the office. We try to use our time more effectively and may alter our travelling times to reduce the amount of time we spend in the car. Others are working on the move, using hot-desking and taking advantage of the new breed of hotel

facilities or enterprise hubs.

In terms of products we now look for compatibility and possibly mobility of office solutions. A prime example of this is the laptop where many of us now only have a laptop and access networks remotely (working part of the time in the office and part at our home office). The traditional monitor stands have given way to laptop stands and we look to utilise technology such as 'bluetooth' for seamless communication whether mobile phone, the internet or company networks.

This new way of working is affecting all types of products, not least desk accessories. The laptop example is only one demonstration of a more general trend. The way in which we use filing and desktop accessories are also moving more into the realms of flexible working. By integrating good quality desk accessories with useful, flexible document management products we can gain a higher degree of control

over project work and important documentation and waste little time transferring documents from one system to another. Typical examples of this can be seen in Esselte's Desk Free Range or Rexel's Professional Range.

In addition to flexible and mobile working practices another important influence is ergonomics and personal space concepts. It is now widely accepted that individuals should be allowed to tailor their own workspace from both an ergonomic and aesthetic point of view. 'Happy, tidy workers equal increased efficiency and reduced absenteeism'. This, in turn, is leading to more choice in terms of colour and design and to the development of 'added value' products. Fellowes' new Microban range is a typical example. A range of desktop accessories geared to the laptop and computer with built in anti-bacterial qualities to promote healthier, cleaner desktop environments. More choice can only be a good thing and demonstrates

FIVE SNIPPETS OF WISDOM:

The desktop should be used to complete tasks in hand and to manage urgent, current and short term work, documents and projects. Everything else should be stored out of site.

It's a good idea to rearrange the physical items on your desk top such as stapler, pens, diary and filing trays once a week. Such small changes will encourage you to review the entire desktop with a fresh eye.

Remember it's no sin to bin!

Forget the myth that a cluttered desk is OK provided you can remember where everything is – you are kidding yourself!

Finally, don't worry what others think – never forget that desktop confusion is nearly always the reflection of a muddled mind!

that while there will always be a commodity, price driven part of the market, there is also a market for another group of consumers who are looking for something to suit his/her specific needs and taste more than worrying only about price.

As well as desk accessories fulfilling the need for individualism, expression of one's personal space and the practicalities of flexible document management, they are also there to provide a method of

'clutter control' And it seems we Brits are not very adept at desktop clutter control. Just look around your own office. How many teddy bears, family snaps, nail files, newspapers or magazines can you see?

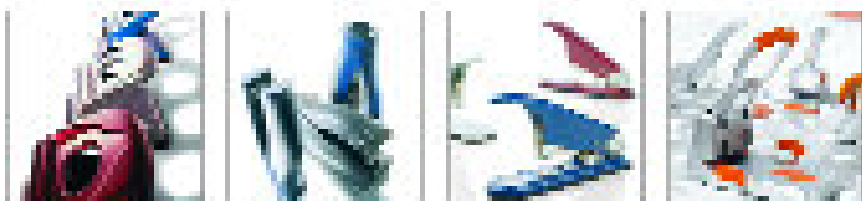
Clear desk policies are still not all that common so there is little incentive for us as individuals to get sorted! After all, who gets assessed in their job role on how tidy their desk is? However, it is true that tidy desks do equal more efficient

workers. This is for a number of reasons. First, a cluttered desk leads to wasted time searching for an essential item and when this is needed urgently the anxiety aroused by its temporary misplacement further undermines concentration and confidence.

Second, being confronted with piles of work to complete not only makes it far harder to stay focused but causes a loss in motivation. Finally, a cluttered desk acts as a

significant barrier to the important psychological process of closure i.e. finishing one job before starting another.

So, next time you visit your customers take a moment to observe the levels of clutter on desks. Enquire about a clear desk policy and if you get a chance explain the virtues of a clear, organised desk. You never know you might just secure a large order! ■



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