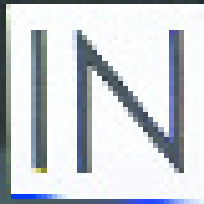


# ORGANISED CHAOS



De-cluttering your workspace and reorganising your information and working practices can lead to great improvements in productivity. We look at what products are available to help achieve this goal.

BY KNEEZ BUKHARI

Larger workloads, shorter deadlines, faster communication – as the pace of life in the modern office heats up, so does the need to be organised. We must handle time and information efficiently and effectively if we are to deliver the results on which we will be judged.

There is strong evidence suggesting that people who have tidier desks work quicker and more effectively. The obvious is true, if you are well organised you will be able to retrieve information faster and keep better track of growing 'to do' lists. In a survey on organisation within the workplace, 82% of those questioned stated that 'keeping my desk tidy would make me work more efficiently.' However, Fiona Mills, marketing director at Avery Office Products UK who conducted the survey, says, "Sometimes we need an incentive to keep our desks looking nice."

By far the most common source of clutter on peoples' desks is acres of papers, files and other documents which account for 92% of desktop space. Ask your customers about their filing systems and find out if this is an opportunity to 'sell' organisation. Although everyone moans about filing, it is still a necessary evil of modern life. One way of making filing more fun is by using fresh, fun filing systems. And with the range of brightly coloured filing solutions available today, the only problem consumers may have is in choosing which ones to buy.

With current working trends heading towards more and more people working from home, organisation is more important than ever. It is forecast that two million people worked from home in 2003 and this is set to rise to over six million in 2007. As more and more people look towards working from home it's becoming more and more important that they organise their home office so they are as efficient as if they were working from the main office. Desk space is usually limited so it is imperative that they keep it organised. Lesley Howe, end user marcomms manager, Brother UK, says multi-function centres are the first choice for the home office as they use up little space and offer users fax, print, copy and scan options in one machine.

It is also important that home workers, like office workers create a filing system which will enable them to find things quickly and easily. Most people choose to pile their work rather than file their work in the fear that they will struggle to find documents again. Being organised in the office, and particularly on the desktop, makes it easier to focus on the things that matter, reduce stress levels, enhance job performance and have more time to do the things we enjoy. But wanting to get organised, and actually getting it done are too different things, and the task can seem a little daunting. Mike Patterson, marketing director at Esselte,



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**MIKE GENNER,  
NATIONAL SALES  
AND MARKETING MANAGER,  
EXPONENT UK**



recommends that you leave your desktop until last. Start with cupboards and drawers furthest away from your desk as they are likely to house the largest proportion of rubbish, then move inwards towards your desk. This way you free up space for material that is currently lurking on your desktop.

Work through cupboards and drawers discarding junk, grouping items together and making sure that box files and storage containers are clearly labelled. Labelling your files clearly with a labelling machine is perfect for cutting out the stress associated with filing. Patterson says, “The key to desktop organisation is simplicity. Only keep the accessories and equipment you use daily on your desk. Give yourself plenty of space to work – there is a psychological advantage to the absence of clutter as well as a physical one.”

Start thinking in positive terms. Associate de-cluttering with the chance to free up time. Don't focus

on the boring and mundane nature of the task itself. Reward yourself with something pleasant. Don't try to introduce too many changes at once - be happy with small steps and nurturing new habits before turning your attention elsewhere. And try to avoid falling into the habit of keeping information on a 'just in case' basis – if in doubt, throw it out.

In order to maximize your sales in this area, think about the organisational needs of your own office. What devices do you use yourself that you could recommend to other businesses? Mike Genner, national sales and marketing manager, Exponent UK, suggests that to >>

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de-clutter, you need to look beyond your desk and remember that the modern equivalent to pen, paper and filing cabinet is your PC and needs to be organised accordingly. Modern businesses store vast amounts of information on computers and, quite apart from the security issues, there are environmental reasons for doing so. Anything that saves on our usage of trees can only be a good thing. But remember that your virtual desktops need to be as organised as your wooden ones.

If a quote, letter, spreadsheet etc, is more than 30 days old archive it to a CD, label the CD and store it away in a suitable CD drawer, library or wallet. Follow the basics and you remove the need for unnecessary paper storage and free up precious computer memory, but the cherry on the cake is that everything you do achieves the holy grail of backing up your data! Mention this key point to your customers and let them know how important it is to save all information onto disk, just in case! There are many storage systems for disks and diskettes available that you could suggest. Which brings us to the inevitable computer accessories. Here, businesses can organise and save space through a variety of ways. If you're selling a computer, it is also an opportunity to sell peripherals and space saving devices. Cable wraps to keep them off the desk and out of the way, desks with built in storage solutions for computer accessories, CD drawers, monitor stands, CPU holders or even wireless keyboards and mice to make the most of the space available. Tuli Mitra, tactical

marketing manager at Acco, says, "Freeing your desk from a plethora of wires and papers is pivotal to your sanity and your productiveness!"

Another form of technology, one that businesses use every day, also needs to be used more efficiently and effectively. Everton Stuart, business development manager at Retell Limited, says, "Better call management and data handling helps companies to de-clutter as well as improve productivity, efficiency and profitability." In order to cut down on those inevitable bits of paper floating round the office with important names and numbers on, make sure your telephone system is as organised as possible. In today's professional environment the speed and the effectiveness of communications often defines the class of an organisation. So when selling different types of technology, think laterally as to how they can be used to help organise an office. Resellers and installers can take advantage of such solutions and offer their customers call recording and call management as an additional service when installing a telephone system.

A good reorganise and spring clean gives everyone a bit of a sanity-check and keeps the housekeeping in good check. Keep all the things you regularly use to hand and filed so you can easily refer to them. Labelling, filing and organising everything clearly might take a bit of time now, but in the long run it will save you lots of time and will reduce that frustrated feeling you get when you can't find exactly what you want. ■

## HERE ARE FIVE BASIC RULES TO FOLLOW:

- 1** Try to keep on your desktop only those things essential to completing the job in hand. Everything else should be stored out of sight.
- 2** Tidy frequently – the more clutter that builds up the harder it becomes to face up to the challenge of imposing order on the desktop.
- 3** Use the circular 'filing cabinet' at your feet frequently to get rid of unwanted material. Remember – it's no sin to bin!
- 4** Forget the myth that a cluttered desk is okay provided you can remember where everything is. In most cases this simply isn't true and, even when it is, the amount of memory being wasted on such an easily avoidable chore is prodigious.
- 5** Don't worry what others think – never forget that desktop confusion is nearly always the reflection of a muddled mind!