

businessoperations

businessoperations

Disorder **Distracts** in the **Workplace**

Office Organization a Good Habit to Cultivate

By Pat Heydlauff

THE U.S. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of Professional Organizations identifies paper clutter as a major impediment to productivity. Some studies have concluded that the average person wastes 4.3 hours per week searching for papers, which can create distractions in the workplace and undermine concentration. Mishandled paperwork also hinders customer service and can ultimately discourage sales and affect a company's bottom line.

Huge corporations and one-person offices alike can benefit from dispelling clutter. Better organization can:

- Increase productivity and profitability
- Keep information confidential and secure
- Reduce mental overload and stress
- Reduce workplace accidents and spills
- Save time and improve effectiveness

An information management system is more than just a filing system. Documents and messages arrive from many sources, including via postal service, e-mail, text messages, cell phones and courier services.

First off, it must be categorized – put into permanent archives or thrown away. An efficient office needs tools to streamline that task such as file folders, filing cabinets for current information, boxes for archives and scanners with backup capabilities for managing information electronically.

Here are some suggested practices:

- Set aside time weekly to manage and organize information, and adhere to that commitment like an appointment.
- Desks should be cleared at the end of the day so at least 80% of the desktop is visible.
- Remove desktop items that are rarely used. Put everything else into drawers, cubicles or containers that are easily accessible.
- Limit the number of personal photographs.
- Use colour-coded vertical desktop file sorters – i.e. green folders for new clients, red folders for established clients that provide you good business, and yellow folders for less important but still necessary information. That way client information can be more quickly found, which can improve client relations and results.
- Deal with documents as they arrive, making a decision whether they require action or can be thrown out or deleted.

Employers might consider promoting a Clean Desk or Clean Workspace Policy with a reward system for those who comply. Employees could also be encouraged to place one personal, creative item on their desks where the stacks of paper once sat. This will serve as a reminder of how easy it is to stay clutter-free and stress-free.

Clutter must be dealt with routinely and regularly. Information organization will become part of employees' routine and the corporate culture if practices are carried out daily. ■

Pat Heydlauff is a consultant on colour, design and organization principles in workplace environments. For more information, see the web site at www.Energy-by-Design.com.

