



NATIONAL BUSINESS
FURNITURE

CLEAR THE OFFICE CLUTTER



INTRODUCTION

Do your co-workers have trouble seeing you over the piles stacking up in your office? Do you shove papers haphazardly into your desk when someone drops by? If so, you may have a clutter problem and chances are it's going to get worse unless you make a change. Why does it matter?

Messy surroundings can play a role in how your boss and co-workers view your performance. According to recent research, three out of four supervisors believe that office clutter is a sign of a disorganization and they rank it on par with a messy personal appearance when it comes to considering what would prevent them awarding a promotion.

Beyond how it affects the perceptions of those around you, it also impacts your ability to focus and process information, overloading your senses and adding stress to your work day. A new study from Kelton Global finds that 62 percent say having a cluttered work area would make them unhappy; this is especially true among female employees (70 percent) compared to men (55 percent).

Clear Office Clutter
& Boost Your
PRODUCTIVITY



CLUTTER CLUES

Ask yourself the following questions to determine whether you really have a problem:

- If asked to find something in your office, do you have trouble locating it quickly?
- Do you have a hard time parting with things?
- When you try to start organizing, do you have trouble knowing where/how to begin?
- Do you have office supplies scattered in different locations, e.g. your briefcase, car, etc.?
- Has your boss or a co-worker mentioned or teased you about your clutter issue?
- Do you have to quickly clean-up when someone is touring the office?

If you answered yes to three or more of these questions, you have a case of the clutters and there are some common roadblocks that are likely preventing you from positive change.



CLUTTER ROADBLOCKS

Why people struggle with office clutter

You may have the best intentions when it comes to straightening up your work area, but life keeps getting in the way. Some of the most common challenges include:

- **Tasks seem overwhelming** and you don't know where to start. Your work day is already full of meetings, appointments and to-dos. It's easy for the piles of paper to keep growing along with your anxiety levels. It can be tempting to just ignore the problem or shove it inside a desk drawer hoping that it all just goes away.
- **Time is already scarce** and there doesn't seem to be a second extra for organizing. Time management is hard to master, but these basic skills need to be practiced daily like a pianist or dancer practices their craft. If you are not making a diligent effort, chances are you will keep things you don't need out of habit or guilt.
- **Fear of change** very often leads to indecision as you ponder that you may need something again at some point—even though you haven't used it for five years.
- **It's your mother's fault.** Not really, but she taught you to never waste anything. You paid for an item and it's still in good condition, so you feel guilty about throwing it out. Instead of being financially savvy, saving those old items could be costing you money. How? You likely have bought multiples of something not realizing you already purchased an item, or what about those late fees for unpaid bills caught under those stacks of paper. Yeah, you get the picture.



CLUTTER PERSONALITIES: WHICH ARE YOU?

The Procrastinator

"I'll get to it later"

If you are this well-meaning clutter personality, you always have someplace to go or something more important to do than organizing and tend to shuffle it off until tomorrow. Unfortunately, tomorrow is usually just as busy, and the clutter continues to build. Action is the key to getting things moving, and quick, visible solutions that demonstrate progress is being made.

Clutter Solutions for Procrastinators

- Select furniture with open cubes and cabinets for a highly visible solution
- Use an easily accessible desk-top organizer
- Organize piles by what you touch daily, weekly and yearly; put items used daily closest to you

The Overthinker

"It's overwhelming! Where do I start"

Overthinkers tend to be perfectionists who always have a vision of how to reduce clutter but have a hard time getting started. These personalities need to remember the 20-80 rule—80 percent of the effects come from 20 percent of the causes. That means you are likely only using 20 percent of those office supplies and papers, so you can eliminate the other 80 percent.

Clutter Solutions for Overthinkers

- Don't try to fix your whole office at once; start with your desk-top, then move to a file cabinet or drawer
- Instead of creating 30 file folders, consolidate into fewer categories
- Avoid over-sorting; keep it simple with fewer binders and only the most important papers

The Saver

"I might need this later!"

Call it sentimental, but the Saver holds on to anything with a story. From a work standpoint, it might be your first winning business proposal from 1995 or that whiteout you haven't used since you had a flip phone. Most likely, these items are just collecting dust, but the Saver feels reassured that they are always there 'just in case.'

Clutter Solutions for Savers

- Paper is a huge issue for savers; look at digital options instead
- If it's been more than a year since you've used something, donate, toss or shred it
- Use tools like [SpamDrain](#) and [PaperKarma](#) to unsubscribe from catalogs and mailings

The Hider

"If you can't see it, there's not a problem"

Driven by the need to store things away, Hider personalities like the idea of order but struggle with 'editing' their collections of stuff. Any drawer or bin will do nicely, but they are generally filled to the brim.

Clutter Solutions for Hiders

- Look for opaque and enclosed storage solutions, like file wallets and pockets
- Subdivide your files and drawers into smaller sections
- Use guides or classification folders to keep your hiding places better organized



CONQUER THE CLUTTER

1

EMPTY YOUR SPACE OUT

It's important to start with a clean slate. It takes time to empty off shelves, clear out drawers, but it will give you a fresh perspective on the space.

2

CATEGORIZE + ANALYZE

As you empty, place like items together. Now, analyzing what you have and determining what you need to purge becomes much easier. If you have 10 pairs of scissors stored in 10 places, you will never know you need to eliminate some. By categorizing, you can easily see what items you have too many of and where you need to add items.

3

LAY OUT THE SPACE

Now is the time to put things back into your shelves and desk. Look carefully at the drawers and shelves that are easy to access—this is your office “prime real estate.” Identify your categories and the items you need daily and place them in those prime real estate areas. For files and items used less frequently, spread out to the areas farther from your desk chair. You might even determine some of your items should be stored outside your office. Remember to keep like items together!

4

PURCHASING PRODUCT

The biggest mistake people make when organizing is to make what should be their last step their first step. Organizational products are important to make a space functional and beautiful as well as maintainable. Once you've determined where things will live, then you can add in product to compliment your design, such as drawer dividers for small office supplies, or magazine files for periodicals and reading materials on shelves.



MAKE ORGANIZING AN EVERYDAY HABIT

Spend your first 15 minutes in the office focused on organizing your space and. This is the ideal time to sort all that paper on your desk as something to toss, delegate or address immediately.

Be cognizant of how often clutter collects in your space. Place time on your calendar, whether monthly or quarterly, to keep your systems in place and review your storage. Make sure you add it into your calendar as a repeated event.

Associate this time with something you enjoy. Clearing your desk becomes more enjoyable with a cup of coffee or while you listen to your favorite podcast.



LABEL! LABEL! LABEL!

Labeling is an essential step in organizing your space, especially in shared spaces like supply rooms. Naming each shelf or file makes finding things easy and keeps the space neat.

CREATE A SORTING ZONE

Use baskets, trays or a collator with the categories “to do,” “to file” and “to shred.”

ELIMINATE AS MUCH PAPER AS POSSIBLE

Digital storage can transform your desk. Reject the pull to print, and click save instead!

COLOR CODING, ORGANIZING

Grouping items by color is an easy way to sort and is aesthetically pleasing!

FIND THE RIGHT ORGANIZER FOR YOU (CLEAR VS. WOOD)

Be realistic about how tidy you will keep things. Clear storage containers are great if you need to see items or the quantity remaining, such as in supply rooms so it's easy to see when re-orders are necessary. However, if your tendency is to toss things into file cabinets rather than stacking or organizing them, opt for an opaque product.





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