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## **Six Survival Tips for Operating a Home Office** **By Don Doman**

You can't beat convenience. Working at home has many advantages, but convenience has to be number one. As far as disadvantages, lack of work space has to be number one. However, you can overcome the lack of work space with several fantastic solutions to maximize organization to partner with the convenience.

### **The Right Furniture**

Quite often work space means a converted bedroom or sharing some other living space. Shelving and lighting is always a concern. There are many decorative metal shelving units which can even sit upon a table or desktop. Metal units constructed with small bars will even allow sunlight and view to penetrate the shelves if they have to be used in front of a window. Metal can easily be spray painted to match. Lamps that produce artificial



sunlight are not only great for a feeling a connection to the outdoors, but if you need to photograph anything you will get the best color with sunlight lamps. You should compare tables to desks to see which will give you the most desktop space. Try out different chairs. Go to a couple of difference stores that sell office chairs. Stay away from extremes like cheapest and most expensive. Look first for comfort and second for longevity. Sit in the chairs and scoot around in them. Do the adjustments suit your body style. You are going to spend a lot of time in your chair working at your desk/table. You might also look for a cushion to add to the seat . . . just to make sure.

## Create Work Zones

Be flexible and be willing to change. The ideal arrangement is to have everything you need accessible by a few rolls of your office chair. Create your work zones based on function. You don't need everything within an easy grasp, but items that you might need all the time should be right there. For example a ream of paper should be close to the printer as well as ink cartridges or toner. That doesn't mean you need to have all your paper next to the printer. You don't need everything in a work zone . . . just enough.



## Create Work Time Zones



Sometimes friends, relatives, and even associates assume that because you are home, you are not working. When people drop in or call to chat, you must be assertive. Let them know, "I'm sorry, but I have work that needs to be done. Can I call you back this evening after work?" Always

be friendly, but your business success depends upon your ability to conduct business on a regular basis. A business phone and a home phone are needed to separate your two lives. However, you need to set up your own work schedule, so that you don't feel work nor play is an imposition. Create your own limits that you can alter as needed.

## Managing Mail Efficiently

Try to handle mail (both snail and email) only once. As you sort mail, deposit unwanted letters and flyers directly into a recycling bin. Use a special "In" tray for items that require immediate response. As you create new folders review old files and deposit them into the recycling bin if you can. Watch for local shredding events or call when your recycling bin is ready for shredding. With email your solution is SAD: Save, answer, or delete. By saving you can just do nothing, but don't plan to come back later and answer. Do it now! By not printing you can search your email files for information when you need it. This save printing, filing and searching.



## Don't Use Office Space for Storage



Use other areas of your home or garage for storage. Remove rarely used files to your storage area to make room for current and future materials. Keep the files you need for you tax records, but get rid of the rest as quickly as you can. De-clutter and destroy files and folders on a regular basis.

## Organize Your Computer Files

An office computer, just like the office itself should be well organized. De-cluttering and deleting unused files and folders frees up valuable storage space and allows you to find current documents more easily. This is as true for computers as it is for the home office. De-cluttering and deleting prevents both you and your computer from slowing down and wasting time. You can now buy



**Don't settle for a hole . . .**

**Get the "whole" disk shredded!**

you can now buy faster and larger hard drives, which means you can move data from a collection of smaller drives and place them in one easily accessible drive. When it comes time to replace your hard drives, remember to not only delete all business/client information from your old drives, but to be safe, it is best to completely destroy the hard drive as well. Although some people say that hard drives can be magnetically



wiped and thereby remove the memory, don't count on it. Even punching a hole in the drive doesn't do the trick. It still leaves confidential data that can be retrieved. Shred the drives to be safe.

By organizing your efforts and your home office you can boost your advantage of convenience, and eliminate the disadvantage of limited work space.

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