

# Working order

**Have you already broken your New Year's Resolution to keep your desk tidy? Here are 6 tips to organise your workplace.**

By Roz Howland

**H**ow long do you spend searching for documents in your office? What about time spent procrastinating? A mere ten minutes daily can set you back a whole working week, annually. And that's just counting your 10 minutes – what about your staff?

Being organised is one of the most powerful, effective tools you can implement for success in business. It is also possibly the most underestimated!

Successful businesses review all parts of their operations regularly – and organising

is no different. Review your office space and practices regularly to discover where you can create more time, energy and money. Start with these top tips.



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## WITHIN REACH

Sit at your desk and look at what is at arm's length. Do you use all of it daily? If not, remove it. This includes old post-it notes in your top drawer and read magazines on your desk. Use this rule on your desk, computer and around your entire office. The more frequently you access an item, the closer it needs to be to you. Don't clog up your valuable working space with files and tools you use infrequently.

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## BEAT PROCRASTINATION

When it strikes, it can be brutal. Be armed with the tools to blast through procrastination and meet that deadline:

1. Place a blank piece of paper and pen on a clear surface in the room where you are working.
2. Leave the room – but don't go too far.
3. March exaggeratedly on the spot for 45 seconds (wide arms, high legs) thinking only of marching.
4. Return to your piece of paper.
5. Write down the most important task you have to do NOW.
6. Set a timer for 15 minutes.
7. Begin that task.
8. Do not stop or allow yourself to be interrupted for anything.

After the 15 minute mark you will have blasted through that point of procrastination. You will have finished a 10-15 minute job – or started a small part of a bigger project.

## EMAIL ORDER

I know, I know. Old habits are hard to break – but you must if you want to move on from your email addiction! Turn your email off whilst working on other projects. Disable all flags and sounds that alert you to the never-ending flow of email. Schedule in one, two or three times daily to check and respond to emails. Stick to it! You'll be amazed at how your productivity increases.

## PHONE CALLS

Voicemail was invented for a reason. Use it as often as possible. Schedule certain times of the day to make phone calls. Phoning in blocks saves you time and energy. It also lets your brain settle into a certain space and momentum, increasing overall efficiency. Try a minimum block of 15 minutes and a maximum of 40 minutes.

## DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Everything entering your office has a life cycle. It may be with you for five minutes, five years or perhaps forever. It needs a home for every day, minute, second it's with you. Divide your office into zones: entry/exit point, current working files, short term storage, medium term storage and archiving. The last two may be offsite. Within the zones have the right tools. Do you like the horizontal document trays or do you prefer vertical journal box style? Make time to find out what works for you and your organising style.

You can be as messy as you like, but at the end of the day, each part of your mess needs a home to go to. Being tidy may be a by-product of being organised but it is not the main aim. The aim is to create more time, space, money and energy for you.

## UNSUBSCRIBE

Take time to unsubscribe from all electronic and hard copy mail that you do not wish to receive. For e-subscriptions, set up a separate email address (or at least a dedicated folder) to receive newsletters. Trial the ones you are interested in and never be afraid to unsubscribe. 'Why bother'? I hear you ask. 'I just don't read them.' Apart from avoiding a full inbox, and the possibility of not being able to receive mail you do want, the psychological effect of 'less' mail coming in will do wonders for your productivity, not to mention your stress levels.