

One of the key elements of a well-organized office is space optimization. To achieve this, look at your space (desk, walls, file cabinets, storage units, even the floor) from a fresh perspective.

Just as with real estate, "location, location, location" is key in office organization. The things you use most often get the best real estate--close to you and where you use them. Picture a dartboard--the bull's-eye represents your desk and the items you use most often. The next ring represents less frequently used items; the next ring, even less often used items, etc.

Combine this idea with one of the most basic principles of organizing--having a "home" for everything. That way you'll always know where to find things and where to put them away. Choose a place that makes sense to you, not necessarily where someone else would put them.

Remember in kindergarten when you learned to keep like things together? The same applies to your office. Here are some guidelines to consider when sitting at your desk or "command center":

- Place all frequently used supplies in, on, or close to your desk. For example, if you use your stapler daily, place it within easy reach while seated at your desk.
- Keep items used once or twice a week at arm's length. For example, if you refer to a manual to look up a code or procedure, keep it where you can easily access it by simply reaching for it or spinning your chair around to get it.
- Store items used only once or twice a month inside your office or cubicle, but outside your "reachable zone."
- Put supplies used less frequently (refills of paper clips, pens, paper, etc.) in an office supply cabinet down the hall.

Think vertically! Use your wall space to help keep your desk clear. It doesn't matter if you have office walls or cubicle walls; there are plenty of products on the market to help you stay organized.

- Bulletin or magnetic boards are great for hanging frequently referenced items (phone extensions, zip codes, calendar, etc.).
- Walls are an excellent place to post department or company goals, mission statements, or sales charts.
- File holders that attach to the wall or hang over a cubicle are a great way to keep frequently used files or current projects within close reach.

Think of your desk as a "processing center." What comes in must be dealt with and sent on its way. Many people mistakenly think of their inbox as a holding tank when actually it's to be used for receiving items, not storing them. Try to empty your inbox at least once a day.

Take a step back from your desk and look around your space to see if you are applying these principles of organization. If not, make adjustments where you can; and then enjoy the extra "breathing room" you've just created.

Let us know about the improvements you make in your space by commenting on our blog. We'd love to see before and after pictures too, so please send them to us!