

Top Ten Office Storage Mistakes

By Ramona Creel

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Organizing is a very personal experience -- your methods and techniques should be customized to your particular situation and needs. But there are some basic guidelines you should follow. As you work, try to avoid the following list of common storage mistakes:

STARTING WITHOUT A PLAN

Imagine taking a trip to a new city without directions to your final destination. How would you ever get there? That's what organizing without a plan is like. Know what you want to accomplish, what steps you need to take to get there, and your **TIMELINE** for accomplishing each step before starting out.

NOT CLEANING OUT BEFORE YOU ORGANIZE

Organizing involves more than just moving your stuff around. Organizing is all about devoting your space to those objects you use most and clearing out the rest of the clutter. If you want your organizing experience to be a successful one, expect to make some hard decisions about what to keep and what to get rid of.

USING OPAQUE STORAGE CONTAINERS WITH NO LABELS

All the space in the world won't do you a bit of good if you can't see what you're storing. Your best choice is a clear container that allows you to see what's inside. If you have to use an opaque tub or box, be sure to label its contents.

SAYING "I'LL PUT IT HERE FOR NOW"

One of the biggest mistakes you can make with your storage is creating "in-between" spots for your belongings. Rather than just sitting something down in the first place you see, make sure you have a **SET** home for each item -- and a logical reason for putting it there.

FAILING TO SUBDIVIDE BIG OPEN SPACES

A lot of storage spaces are so big that they become almost impractical. Just dumping your stuff into a huge gaping closet or cabinet doesn't make you organized. Sometimes it's better to break large spaces up into smaller components -- using shelves, racks, and containers.

IGNORING YOUR DEAD SPACE

You actually have more room out there than you think -- if you look in the right places. Dead space can sometimes double or triple your available storage. Don't forget about the areas under beds, on the backs of doors, near the ceiling, and on the floor.

FAILING TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS

Remember that your storage is a dynamic system -- it's always changing, as your interests and lifestyle change. The system you set up today may serve your every need right now, but will it still work for you in a year or two? Be flexible, don't be afraid to make changes when necessary, and always keep an eye out for systems that need a little tweaking.

FILLING YOUR STORAGE TO CAPACITY

Do you ever plan to buy anything new ever again? If you stuff your storage spaces to overflowing, where will you put your purchases? As you organize, think about leaving some free space -- room to grow.

STORING ITEMS TOO FAR AWAY

It may seem like common sense, but we don't always think to put things nearest the point where we will use them. Make an effort to look at your storage with a critical eye -- and feel free to move objects around if your current system doesn't make sense.

SKIPPING THE YEARLY PURGE

Don't think that once you have set up your storage spaces, you are done. You need to take some time at least once a year to sort through your belongings -- pulling out anything that is broken, hasn't been used in the past 12 months, or has become obsolete.

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