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The Home Designer Do Your Homework

By Brandon Neff



Create a relaxing and beautiful work zone without a desk - just add your laptop or tablet. Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design

table, keeping your office clutter under wraps will help you take a visual break from your office responsibilities while not at work. Most importantly, respect your home office, and the sacred space you've created, by separating work activities from home activities while on the clock. Minimizing distractions will increase productivity and allow you to accomplish your professional goals.

Go for color. Choose an inspired wall color to increase your productivity. Studies show that women feel depressed in offices painted white, beige or gray, so stick to hues that turn up the energy volume. By the way, orange and purple tend to turn off the guys. Greens, soft blues and yellows, along with rich reds, both invigorate the mind and increase imagination and focus. Try painting just one wall a revved-up shade as a focal point, or take that color even higher and paint the ceiling. Additionally, set up your desk next to natural light - artificial lighting tends to dull productivity, and can stress your nerves after prolonged periods. However, where bulbs are unavoidable, dim the lights - run, don't walk to your local hardware store and buy a dimmer. Good lighting is essential in an office, and making sure you can control the brightness is key when transitioning from day to evening. Skip the fluorescents, and get halogen bulbs - they more closely mimic natural daylight - giving you and your office a prettier glow. Better yet, for a sexier office try amber bulbs - instant facelift!

Make it personal. Take advantage of creating a work environment that's designed just for you by keeping furnishings, decorative objects and art that you enjoy close at hand. I believe how you work is inspired by where you work, and how you live. Choosing to set up shop at home gives you the opportunity to create a work environment that brings out your best. Personalize your work space with things you love. Look, you can't keep your head buried in your desk all day, so surround yourself with photographs and mementos that make you smile when you come up for air. If you're sharing the space with your partner, ask him or her to incorporate meaningful pieces to harmonize your individual tastes.

Do double duty. If your office also serves as the guest/media/ironing/needlepoint room, choose furniture that serves two purposes. Smaller scale sofas that double as sleepers, or futon-style chairs that unfold offer you a place to sit and catch up on reference reading by day, and offer your unexpected visitor a place to crash. Look for smaller-sized pieces known as "condo" scale furniture that allows you more options for a floor plan that suits your needs. Also, as technology improves, and smaller, more portable devices are available, you may choose to do away with a traditional desk and chair set up, and build an office around a cozy chair and ottoman - hey, if you're going to work in your pajamas you might as well be reclining! (This is meant to be a joke; if you're not willing to dress

In light of the current job market, millions of Americans are still out of work, and many Bay Area professionals are choosing to launch their own home-based businesses and take the reins of their employment futures firmly into their own hands. If we are asked to make lemonade out of lemons (and this is shaping up to be another banner lemon of a year economically), then regaining control of your own destiny is key to navigating this lopsided economy. Truly, home offices are quickly becoming both a necessity and a refuge. If you're like many of your contemporaries, and looking to take back some power, I have a few tips on how to create a work space at home to keep you competitive with all of those C-level posers on Wall Street. So, before you go back to that card table you call a home office, take some A-list design inspiration and create yourself a comfortable and beautiful space to build your empire.

Keeping your at-home, work zone comfortable, yet practical and chic is the key to successfully creating an office that can help you grow your business. However, as most home offices need to fulfill several functions - like guest bedroom, dining room or the space you store your better half's family heirlooms - interior real estate is usually at a premium, and knowing how to effectively lay out your room is key. Read on.

Stay focused. It's important to keep visual clutter to a minimum. Choose storage boxes in one color for all of your magazines, receipts and office supplies - russellandhazel.com offers great, colorful options. These can be displayed on your desk or shelving - keeping needed papers at the ready - while giving you easy clean up at the end of your tasks. If, like many, your office doubles as the family dining

appropriately for your profession, even at home, you're not taking it seriously.)

Go back in the closet. If space is really limited, annex your closet as a cozy office niche. Remove the doors, slide in a stylish desk, install simple shelving in place of the clothing rod and voila! For added light, mount plug-in adjustable sconces over the desk to save space. And, for even tighter spaces many furniture sellers are producing freestanding armoires that transform into a workstation with storage - just add a comfy desk chair.

As always, purchase the best quality you can afford, and don't scrimp on treating yourself to a little luxury - a simple sterling cup to hold paperclips, or a stack of monogrammed note cards will remind you of your victories along the path of your own private, corporate ladder.



Create a corner office of your own using comfortable furnishings and plenty of natural light. Photo courtesy Brandon Neff Design

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