

## Accomplish more by creating a better workspace

Written by Julie Desmond  
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Some say what is on a desk is a direct reflection of what is in the head of the person who uses it. Put the paper down and look around for just a minute. What surrounds you? And what does that say about how you work? Creating a more favorable workspace is easy to do, and can actually improve a person's ability to achieve great things.

Jared has one of those spaces that make people shake their heads. He seems disorganized, but he will be the first to tell you, "Everything is important." The head shakers suspect Jared could be more efficient if he worked differently. But Jared is not disorganized; he just comes across that way. The word organize suggests file folders and ladies' magazines. Let's change organize to establish, and see what we can make happen in your space.

First, establish a place for everything. This rarely requires file folders and boxes. Look at where items land as they are used. If the stapler gets dropped on the right hand corner of the desk, but the rules of organization say the stapler should be in the drawer, then your time and energy is wasted when you put the stapler away and take it out again. You will hunt for it in the drawer, and find it where you used it last. Establish the upper right corner of your desk as the stapler's rightful place, and leave it there, always.

Establish places for other frequently used items: pens, post-its, flash drives. As you do this, keep the center of your desk free. You must have a place to actively work, and that place must be dedicated solely to what you are working on at the moment.

Visual types like open shelving; others prefer hiding things away in drawers. Establish a style one way or another, so you don't lose time trying to think like someone else about where things disappeared to. Either way, buy multiples of things you use in two places: for example, leave one phone charger at home and one at your desk.

Establish a one-touch system for mail. Deal with each new item or flag it with specific notes. Establish a recycling spot and be generous with it. If you have information on your calendar, recycle the flyer.

Establish a paper route: either file everything, or create desktop bins for each project. Knowing where it goes and routinely getting it there means you will know where to look for it later on. Request reports in electronic form and save the Earth while preserving desktop real estate for working.

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Establish priorities. Approach your work, first, according to urgency and, second, according to what you can make the most progress on in the shortest amount of time. If you have ten minutes to kill, kill the ten-minute report you have to file, even if it isn't due yet. It's now out of the way, leaving longer stretches of time for other tasks.

Manage distractions. Establish a scrapbook for jotting random bits of inspiration. The dress designer who frequently jots dress ideas on envelopes and napkins might want a funky napkin holder on her desk. This is her scrapbook, and it's always there when she needs an idea.

Most importantly, establish a Tomorrow Today routine. At the end of today, jot to-do list for tomorrow. Leave it on that empty space in the center of your desk. Tomorrow, you will know exactly where you left off.

*Julie Desmond is an experienced recruiter and career counselor. She currently leads Job Search and Career Planning workshops in Minneapolis, MN. Please send your questions or comments to [Julie@Insightnews.com](mailto:Julie@Insightnews.com).*