

Financial Planning

Practice Tips

Put your office in order.

By Mary Lacey Gibson, CFP®

November 1, 2005- Leaving an office at the end of the day with a clean desk and everything in its proper place is a goal many never seem to achieve. If piles of paper, boxes on the floor, unopened mail precariously stacked on a table, file drawers ajar and overflowing wastebaskets seem all too familiar, you're not alone.

Your ability to manage time may partially be to blame for this organized chaos, but another culprit is not having an easy place to put everything. A study of people with messy offices found that when you looked into their bedroom closets, similar disarray existed. So, take a lesson from professional closet organizers.

The first secret to successful bedroom closet organization is to take everything out, weed through what you don't need or wear anymore, and only put back what's necessary. The second step is to provide structure and a place for everything. The closet is redesigned so that the clothing and shoes can be kept neatly and in individual separate spaces. Third, put your most frequently used clothing in the middle, so you can easily see and reach it when you open the closet. Seasonal clothing and things you don't regularly wear often have their own sections but are placed high and low. Finally, one of the most important secrets to success is to have good lighting.

Translating this to your office, first clean out what you don't use or need. Never let these items back into your office and make prodigious use of your shredder and wastebasket. Second, things that you need in your office must have a central place of their own in storage, file cabinets and on bookshelves. We tend to forget that we belong in our offices, too. So, good supportive chairs, tables, keyboards and desks at the appropriate heights and appealing surroundings are vitally important. Third, store things that you use often nearby so that it is easy to put them away rather than stack them on your desk. Items that are used less often can be placed farther away. And, to ensure a pleasing office, good lighting is essential.

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