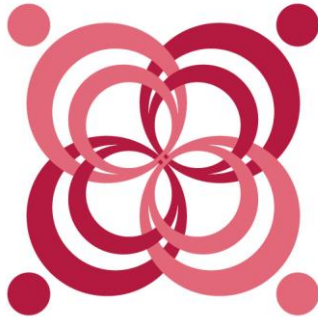


How to Organise Your Home Office for Maximum Productivity!



beyondthe**maze**

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How to Organise Your Home Office for Maximum Productivity!

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How to Organise Your Home Office for Maximum Productivity!

Feeling disorganised is no fun: *Being* disorganised, even less so. Yet so many of us stumble on, lamenting to friends and family that our lives are so chaotic.

We have so many reasons for not making the changes we need. We think it's down to all the circumstances in our lives: The three preschoolers we've been wrangling (except that two of them are now in school); the elderly relative we've been part-caretaking (which leaves us too exhausted the rest of the week for proactive activity); the kids' extra-curricular activities that seem to eat up the week in a flash...

When you put all these reasons together, you see there's one common thread in this theme: You're not making time for *you*. (Or if you do, it's collapse-time!)

So you struggle on in your businesses, trying to learn that course you invested in before eventually putting it on the back burner; rushing to get a project out to a client (and immediately getting started on the next one); or just plain procrastinating because you feel powerless and tired. Perhaps even a little confused.

The big danger about being disorganised is that **it becomes a habit**. Breaking habits doesn't happen through thinking and agonising about it: Breaking habits happens when we **TAKE ACTION!**

If you really want to get your business back on track (and make it feel fun again), a really easy way is to start by organising your home office—for maximum business productivity!

Why You Should Organise your Home Office

People tend to think of a home office as a place where they do their work.

It's not. That is just *one of your home office's functions*.

Think of it as a **tool for running a successful business**. It is to your service-based or affiliate business what a sewing machine is to a seamstress, or a forge to a blacksmith. If your sewing machine doesn't work or you can't find the lighter to light your forge fire with, you won't get your work done!

Or else you'll spend...

- **Hours fixing that sewing machine**—floundering around on YouTube looking up videos—after finally abandoning the manufacturer's incomplete manual (and discovering you don't have a screwdriver small enough to remove the foot-plate)
- **Hours looking for your lighter**—or else you're jumping in your truck and spending an hour and a half running into town, to buy another one

That's *actually what happens to your productivity when your home office is disorganised*. You lose productivity, energy—and hours of time.

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Disorganisation is:

- Tiring
- Frustrating
- Stress-producing
- Energy consuming
- Time-eating
- Depressing

You could also say it's contagious. (Ever notice how one tiny, disorganised area snowballs into an avalanche, if you let it go for even a little while?)

Organise your home office and you will **maximize productivity in your business** - so you're getting stuff done!

Step One: Make Your Plan

It doesn't matter whether or not your office is just a little cluttered, with one or two "trouble spots"... or buried under a mountain of chaos and dust-bunnies: You should still consider organising it to maximize your productivity.

While cleaning is great, that's only one step. You also need to do some serious analysis, planning and decision-making.

"Mess" is not always a symptom of sloppiness, procrastination or a tribe of little six-year-olds (or big sixteen-year-olds) thundering round the house, destroying everything in their path: More often, it's a clear indicator that **something is not working**.

Spots where clutter piles up... filing that never gets done... information that you can't find...all mean there is a barrier or bottleneck in your home office flow.

This can all be dealt with. And we can help! Are you ready?

Five Essential Steps to Getting Started

1. Set aside a morning or afternoon to work on your home office.

Make sure you choose a time period where you won't be interrupted by children, phone calls or deadlines. Schedule it. Treat it as sacred.

Make a commitment not to let anyone or anything distract you from doing this.

2. Look around. Assess your home office space as objectively as you can.

On the morning of your Home Office Organisation Day, don't straight away rush into cleaning. Instead, make a cup of your favorite relaxing beverage. Sit comfortably, turning

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your chair away from the computer. Look around. Identify areas that:

- Have accumulated piles of clutter (even small ones)
- Contain items you never use
- Contain broken elements
- Cause you difficulty when you go to sit there or get something (e.g. shelves that are too high to simply reach up to)
- Are hard to keep organised

3. **Make a list.**

(Or draw a thumbnail-sketch plan, if you are a visual planner).

List each trouble spot—for example, “filing drawer that sticks half-way”.

4. **Make a second list**, answering the questions:

- “Is this really the best space for my office?”
- “What are its problems?”
- “Is the lighting adequate during my working hours?”
- “Are my working hours reasonable and fit into the best time slots for me and my lifestyle?”
- “Could I move my home office somewhere else in the house? Do I need to?”
- “What would make my home office feel even better?”
- “What am I always wishing I had in my home office that I don’t have?”
- “What am I always wishing I could get rid of?”

Next, under the heading of “Ergonomics”, ask yourself:

- “Is my chair comfortable enough? Does it support me well or does it cut off my circulation, make my back tired or is too low or too high?”
- “Is my desk comfortable or am I ‘making do’ with an old table or a desk not meant for my computer?”
- “Do I need to adjust:
 - The desk height?
 - The chair height?
 - The lighting level in my office?”
- “Is the lighting in my office pleasant and adequate or does it give my eyestrain or headaches?”
- “Is the light in the right spot for me?”

Take your time on this evaluation phase—and be sure to **write down your answers**.

Think deeply about each question, no matter how small. One tiny inconvenience in your office set-up can literally snowball into other inconveniences—and bad habits.

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5. Think also about what your office is set up to help you handle.

Are you:

- Talking to clients on the telephone or Skype?
- Creating products or providing services?
- Do you need hard copy records or can everything stay on computer?

Once you have completed these sets of questions, **prioritize each action that needs to be taken**. Then number each in order of priority.

Base your prioritization on your own, personal, most important criteria:

- **What needs to be done first** in order for other things to happen (E.g.: “Move office off the couch and into kitchen nook”)
- What you can easily do yourself
- What you can afford—right now

If you can't afford to buy that new desk, get creative. Can you swap the desk with a relative who has a more suitable style and doesn't need the same things you do? Can you buy it at an inexpensive online marketplace such as Gumtree.com.au.

Now here's another tip that you are going to like...

You do not always have to completely disassemble and move your entire office to make it work more efficiently.

Sometimes, the smallest “fix” is all that is needed to produce a reverse-snowball effect—where the clutter magically stops, you find better ways to do things, it becomes easier to be efficient—and you enjoy working in your home office again.

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A WORD ABOUT QUALITY

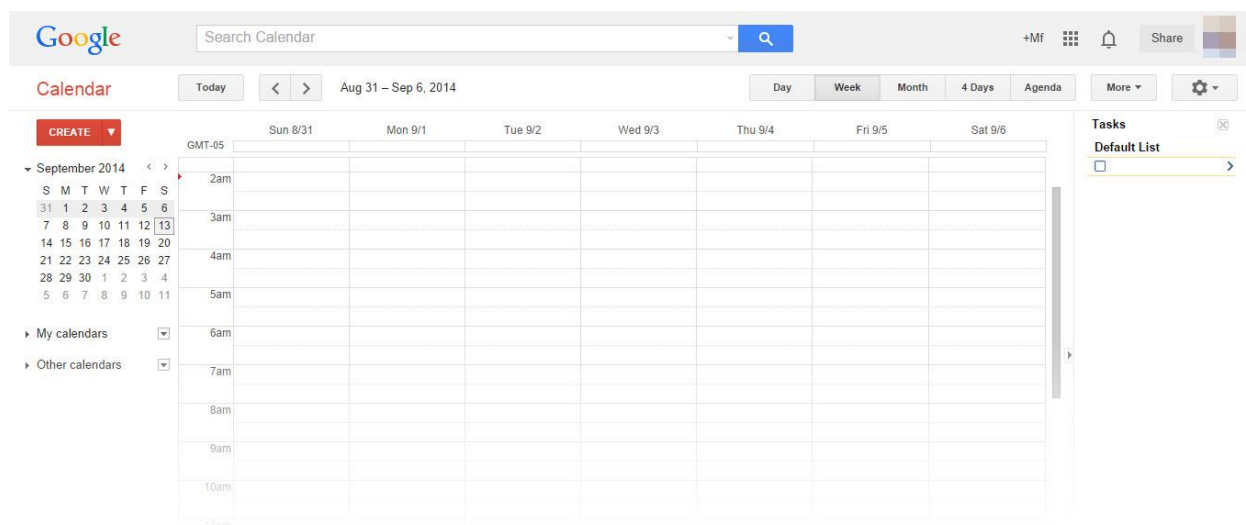
Even if you are on a tight budget, be sure to invest in the best quality accessories or furnishings you can afford. (Note: They don't have to be expensive. They just have to hold up!)

Not only will you feel good at having items that make you feel successful, better quality items are more likely to function more efficiently.

Step Two: Organisation Tips and Tools

One of your most important tools should be your calendar. If you have problems with organisation, try two types—a long term calendar for keeping track of deadlines and appointments over several months and a daily scheduler for reminding you of immediate activities and helping you track your time.

Your long-term calendar should be whatever works best for you—a paper wall or desk calendar... or a program such as [Google calendar](#).



Another solution, highly recommended if you are in the service industry and especially if you have **more than one client** and/or **outsource**: Project management software that includes a calendar, such as [Asana](#).

Asana is free and you can add users, so you can schedule and manage all your outsource contractors. There is a premium paid membership, however you may find that the free version is suitable for your business initially.

Asana assists with allocating tasks to staff members through email. Staff can comment on tasks so you know where the tasks are at every moment of the day.

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It also integrates well with iPhone and Android, and you can set up due dates and notify your team. (Use it also to manage project messaging and communication.)

For short-term, daily scheduling, if it's just a matter of scheduling yourself, if lists work for you then write a list of things you need to do and schedule your day around that. If you are an audio person then make that list verbally. With all the voice recording software available on standard phones these days it is easy enough to do.

Really focus on what you have to do. Try working in segments. Work for 1.5 hours and take a 10 min break. Walk outside and get a breath of fresh air, it makes a world of difference and really keeps you focused on what you are doing.

You'll feel a sense of accomplishment as you "tick off" each task.

There are many rich resources on the net to help you organise your office:

Explore them, and invest in **systems, software and apps** to help you in your task.

Remember, an ounce of organisation will save you time, money—and aggravation (providing you remember to use it!)

IF YOUR PC FILES NEED A MAKEOVER...

If your computer files are also in chaos, set aside a separate morning, afternoon or day to "spring clean" these too.

Do this within the same week as you make over your office.

Step Three: "Must Have" Office Essentials

It doesn't matter what your personal style is: All home offices need basic essentials, such as:

- A calendar system
- A filing system
- A company manual
- A scheduling system
- An ergonomic, comfortable layout
- Good lighting

After that, it is up to you to decide on further "essentials". You might decide that an office door is essential for the way you like to work, to shut out distractions—or if you're the mother of younger children, you might infinitely prefer your "kitchen nook" office open to the kitchen and living room, so you can keep an eye on them while reassuring them with your presence.

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Or for you, an essential might be a large (or not-so-large) **erasable whiteboard** so you can jot down important notes, reminders, appointments and scheduling details... or you might prefer a **small, cork bulletin board** inside your cubicle-style desk, on the wall, where you can pin up printouts of your schedule, stick affirmations to inspire you, or include photographs of family members—or your dream home (or whatever goal you are working towards).

We've already covered calendars and scheduling, but other essentials we need to discuss include, first and foremost, **the layout of your desk**.

Do you feel your desk layout is perfect... or is there some problem you're experiencing?

(Really think about this: We tend to “blind” ourselves to inconveniences—especially when we are focused on deadlines.)

- Is the light perfect... or do you suffer from eyestrain? Does the sun blind you for a certain period every day?
- Is your office chair perfect... or is it too low? Too high? Does it hurt your back or is it (God forbid) too “tippy”?
- Is your keyboard at the perfect height... or is it too low? Too high? At an awkward angle? Does it hurt your wrists or make your shoulders ache or are you frequently hitting wrong keys?

You have to spend hours per day in your home office (and even if you work part-time right now, you still deserve—and need—to work in comfort.

An ergonomically-arranged desk-chair-lighting layout will increase your efficiency and enjoyment—and stop you finishing the day with a sore neck, blinding headaches or carpal tunnel syndrome!

A WORD ABOUT MOVING FURNITURE...

If you think you might have to move heavy items such as desks, bookcases or file cabinets, arrange your office restructuring session so that other adults in your family are available to help you move the furniture immediately after you've planned your new office.

Book the time with them.

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Your Company Manual

Even if you plan to go “100% paperless”, do create a Company Manual—and show its location to the person who will be handling your affairs should you ever fall seriously ill to the point of being unable to run your business (or worse!)

In addition to key information such as your mission statement, licensing numbers (if you have them) and contact information for key staff members or outsourcing contractors, leave a one-page list of instructions so that if anything happens to you:

- Contractors and clients can be notified
- Subscriptions can be stopped
- Bank accounts or online accounts such as your merchant account or PayPal can be accessed by your designated second-in-command—or executor

You can do this with simple MS Word typed lists... or print out an Excel database containing “Key Company Information”.

Your lists should include the following for each subscription, contractor, client or account:

- **Contact person** name, phone number, mobile SMS address and/or email address
- **What you need this person to know** (or do)
- **The amounts in question** (if we are talking a service, contractor payment or subscription)
- **Payment arrangements** for contractors, subscriptions, etc.
- **Payment method** for each: (E.g. “Business bank account” or “PayPal automatic payment”)
- **The date each payment is due** for each item

Also include a separate page stating where, on your computer, such things as client files or projects can be found—and anything else that will make life easier for family members or business assistants or project managers struggling to keep your business together (or get it ready for termination), should disaster strike.

Finally, be sure to discuss this plan beforehand with a trusted family member, your project manager or business assistant.

If the person you are designating arrangements to will be handling them “long distance”, make sure you really trust them and that they have access to this information.

Your Filing System

Another area of office organisation that will be essential: An easy, thorough filing system. Again, it doesn't matter whether or not it is paperless (i.e. on computer or online in cloud storage) or physical (in a file cabinet)—as long as your filing system works for you.

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If you typically have trouble filing, make sure you set your filing up so that you have a set time for it every day. (Every week, at the least!)

If you make a conscious effort to do your filing every day, going through your “IN” tray or “To Be Filed” tray before you shut up shop for the night, it will soon become more than a habit: It will become a pleasing ritual—especially if you add **sitting down and planning at least three priorities for the next day’s workload** to your scheduler or To Do list.

PHYSICAL FILING TIP

Convert the bottom, right-hand drawer in your desk into a hanging file system, so you can simply glance down to see the names of each file section.

That way, you can simply drop receipts, tax information or client worksheets into your files as you sit at your desk.

Step Four: Creating Maximum Inspiration

Now that you’ve taken care of the essentials, it’s time to make sure that your home office serves one other, vital function—that it provides you with maximum:

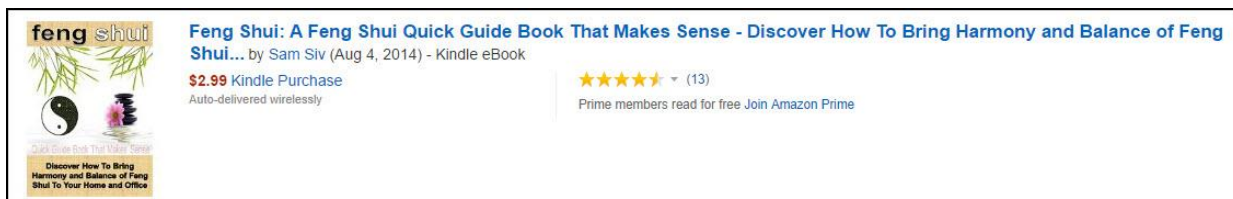
- Inspiration
- Creativity
- Energy

And that it becomes a stress-free oasis where you pursue your life’s passion.

Use décor items to help achieve this effect. (You can even download and read a book on **Feng Shui** first, such as:

- [Secrets to a Feng Shui Office](#) by Dr. Daniel Amos
- [Feng Shui: Discover how to bring Harmony and Balance to your Home and Office](#) by Jon Cheng

(Feng Shui is the ancient, oriental art of harmonious room and furniture balancing in your immediate environment.)



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But you don't need to hire an interior designer: You just need to know or decide what makes your environment not only pleasant but inspirational for you to work in.

This could be the simple placement of:

- Candles
- Plants
- Cut flowers
- A sculpture
- A picture (or pictures)

Feng Shui principles encourage a mixture of the inanimate with natural, live elements: For example, including a water feature or a plant that you have to stop and nurture daily.

Your water feature could be anything from one of those little stone desktop fountains to an aquarium wall (or even a colorful Siamese fighting fish in a glass bowl).

If you combine fishes in a tank with water plants, you oxygenate your office atmosphere—and fish are soothing and de-stressing to watch as they glide around the little undersea world you've created for them.

Whatever makes your office a space that is both more relaxing and more energizing in the right measures is no luxury: It's a "must"!

Step Five: Cutting Down on Distraction

There is nothing worse than being unable to find files or items you need—starting with passwords! If you've ever wasted half an hour unsuccessfully trying out passwords, trying to find the latest version (from the last time you had to change that password) and finally re-setting passwords to a subscription account or online platform you use, then don't delay any longer. Download a central password manager such as:

- [LastPass](#)

Both are free to download and once you've created a strong, central password, you will never have to worry about your passwords again!

You don't have to remember every password you currently use, either, to set them up. Once you have given your password manager access to your computer, it will automatically store passwords you've already saved to your computer. (Just make sure you take the option of **deleting these passwords from your computer's memory**, when prompted, once they have been saved to your LastPass vault.)

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Not only is this handy and convenient, it will save you hours of time over your work weeks—and it will keep all your accounts, logins and subscriptions secure and safe!

CAUTION!

Be sure to keep ***a physical copy*** of your central Password Manager password in an easily-accessible, safe place. (If your computer suffers a malfunction—an all-too-common problem, if you are using Windows 8—you may lose key data all over the place.)

Try writing it on your bulletin board, directly visible to your eye (no one is going to know exactly what it's for). Or put it at the back of your daytimer.

Be sure to put it in your Company Manual!

And if you can't move your office away from distraction, try **moving the distraction away from your office!**

For example...

- Move the TV to another room (or round a corner from your office, to at least reduce the noise)
- Give your kids headphones, if they are prone to playing noisy computer games or watching YouTube videos

And if you haven't already done so, don't be afraid to **set firm boundaries**.

("Sorry, boys: You need to go down to the rec room if you're going to play "Final Fantasy". Four p.m. to 6 p.m. is mommy's office quiet time.")

Remember: In the end, it's totally up to you to decide what is essential to a well-functioning, enjoyable home office. You work hard and you've earned that right!

Finally, don't procrastinate—take steps to start organising your home office for minimal stress, maximum productivity and maximum profits today!

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Are you interested in learning more and getting even more organized with your life and/or business?

Do you feel that you or your child doesn't quite "fit in" anywhere "in the box"?

Do you want to run a business from home to be flexible around your child's needs?

Do you have an idea but don't know where to start?

Do you need direction on where you are heading?

Feel free to contact us for a no obligation chat about how we can make your life better.

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