

Life SPACES

Ideas to help you claim more time and space on life's journey • Published by Space4U • Volume 1, Summer 2007

How to Grow a Beautifully Organized Home Office

Home offices need tending regularly. Like a garden, when things get out of hand, it's difficult to harvest anything. In our offices, we lose as much as one day a *week* looking for things! The number one complaint I hear from home-based business clients is "I spend so much time looking for things!" Let's examine the ideal conditions and then learn some practical methods for healthy growth.

Start with Good Soil

Under perfect conditions, home offices would all have:

- 🌱 A space that is all yours, dedicated to your business.
- 🌱 Systems which are intuitive and easy to use for everyone.
- 🌱 A business owner who is committed to change.

The flexibility of working at home has its pros and cons. One of the pros is that we have "the whole house" to work in, to wander around when we are on the phone, to spread out our projects. That situation can be a con, too! Choose one place that will be the "home base" for your home office. If you carry product inventory, you'll want an 'office' space and a separate 'inventory/show prep'



space. This can be two separate rooms or two sides of a closet!

I say "space" instead of "room" because a home office could be an armoire which holds your pc, files, and everyday necessities. This armoire could be in a bedroom, family room, kitchen—really anywhere in the house. But think of your office as focused in this one space. Like planning your garden, you choose one space for the roses, one for the veggies, and so forth. Each 'space' has a purpose, so you have the optimum soil and light for that particular plant.

Ideal Climate for Growth

A separate room is ideal for several reasons: fewer interruptions; the psychological "break" with your home life; it reinforces the idea for everyone in the household that you are going to work; it is easier to find office items and client-related materials when needed; fewer people have access so that you'll always know who lost that file! Having your own room creates inspiration and encourages productivity.

If your office needs to share a space with a guest room, baby's room, and bedroom – then work

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Weeding Out

Anyone who does even a small amount of planting knows that weeding is a tedious and thankless job. But, the satisfaction that results when space frees up for sun and air to get at plants is worth hours of patient plugging away. Similarly, we can create "air space" in our drawers, shelves, closets, basements and garages. Here are some practical ideas for weeding out and keeping less.

First, ask yourself some questions: When did you use it last? How much would it cost to get another one, if you should need it in the future? Will the clothing still be in vogue once you get back to that smaller size? If it needs repair, how long has it been in the repair

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🌱 **Where to donate items you're weeding out**

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Spacing Things Out

Your Way or the Highway!

I realize that the philosophies I espouse are easier to say than to do. But one I find completely true is this—the less we have, the less there is to keep track of, look through or keep organized. But it's not a logic issue, is it? Emotion makes us keep items because they trigger wonderful memories. Emotion causes us to keep two or three copies of something – we can't decide if we should keep it in paper format or on the computer, so we do both rather than decide. We don't quite trust technology, so we have two and three backups, which is better than none.

My “no regrets” philosophy (about life in general, but that includes organizing!) says this, “Only you can decide, without regrets, what you want to live without.” For some clients, we don't get rid of much. What we will do is make sure that often-used items are kept in the “everyday” space in the home or office. Things used less often get stored away. Is this a

“Only you can decide, without regrets, what you want to live without.”

postponed decision? To some, yes, there will be another round of sorting out. To some, no. Their desire is to live a simpler life. We can accomplish this by storing what is not used as often. This is a very important part of the first discussion I have with a potential client. It's their stuff. It's their life. They called a professional organizer for some reason – but it's not always the reason you might think.

So it's not “my way,” of organizing; it is yours and mine, together. Without you, I won't know what to keep or not. I won't know how you, your family or business partner thinks. I can give options, but you decide which systems are intuitive and will be easiest to maintain. And from your perspective, you'll have a sounding board – new ideas from my experience working with many people at home or in their business. You will get it done when you want it done, with new skills and systems. So we need each other, don't we, to make this organizing last long after Space4U disappears? That's the real value in organizing; it lasts.



Sue West, Owner, Space4U

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Organized Home Office

hard to create an office space within the room. Draw an imaginary line down the middle or a corner of the room; all office materials should be in that section of the room. If you can keep your papers, client files, business files, computer and such contained in that space, it's so much easier to feel like you are “at work.” This way, when you receive a phone call, everything is at your fingertips.

If you are reorganizing a home office which others will use, for instance kids doing homework, it's important to understand how they think. I have one client who has successfully *involved them* in the organizing effort. Because the children were involved, she could see whether her ways of organizing would work for them or if she needed to create new more child-friendly methods. Even though each child worked differently, we were able to assess everyone's needs and create a space that worked for them all.

A small business client brought his assistant into our discussions. Because both people see the clients and the business from different vantage points, they acted as reality checks for each other as we invented new systems for handling the flow of clients and office procedures.

Fertilize with Self-Talk

We all know home offices are fertile ground for piles to develop! Eliminate the phrase “I'll put this here, for now.” You'll turn around one day and all those “for now” items will have grown into a pile. Remember to do a little maintenance every day. Tell yourself, it's easier to tackle a small pile than an overwhelmingly large one.

Welcome to our first issue of *Life Spaces*.

Most of us get disorganized at some time or another, especially when we go through significant life events — family grows, business grows, we move. Space4U helps equip people with new ideas, advice, creative problem solving and hands-on assistance to figure out new ways to handle what life throws our way.



Donating Feels Good to Both Parties Day Away Gives Everyone a Break

The inter-faith Day Away program, housed at St. John Neumann church in Merrimack, New Hampshire, is a respite care program for adults with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. The program shares the responsibility many families assume caring for an elderly loved one who cannot be left alone safely or who needs the warm interaction of community, in addition to their loving home environment. Some items needed by Day Away include:

- Picture puzzles – 100 pieces or less (no children's puzzles, please)
- Magazine holders (for shelf storage)
- CDs of Mitch Miller Songs
- Art and craft supplies, including paints, ribbon, silk flowers, terra cotta flower pots, picture mattes and frames.

To donate, please contact:
Day Away Coordinator
St. John Neumann Church
708 Milford Road
Merrimack, NH 03054
(603) 880-4689



With each issue of *Life Spaces*, we will highlight a local charity to give our readers an idea of the different needs in the community that might be filled by our decision to create more time and space in our lives.



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Weeding Out

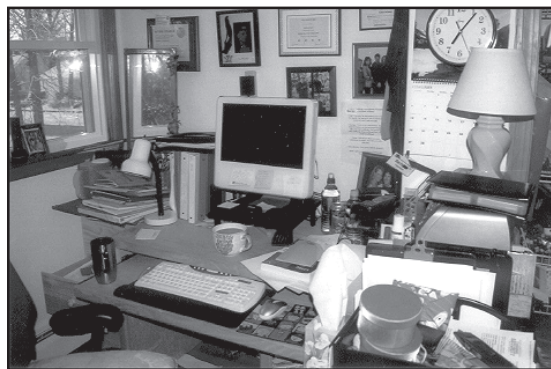


pile – vis a vis the guilt you feel at not having repaired it yet. Make the decision to repair it yourself or pay a repair person to do it. That's the factual side. And now let's examine the emotional side, the hardest.

Realize that **you will notice and appreciate your most favorite items, once you weed out.** In my work, I constantly hear, "Oh, I'd forgotten I had this." And a wonderful memory follows. The object was forgotten because it was hidden away. Now imagine taking your favorite objects and putting them to use, for their original purpose or a new creative use. You honor your memories and call

shelf. All the rest she kept in an under-the-bed storage bin, until she decides whether she wants to keep all of them or not. It is quite common to go through two rounds of sorting when you're unsure. Once you live with a little less, you realize the joy of simplifying your life, so you do it again.

A friend in her 50's spent her young married life in Europe. She had wonderful memories which came to the present when we found several plastic bins of her clothing from all those years ago. She had photos of her wearing some of the outfits but that wasn't enough. She decided to also keep her favorites and downsize from several bins to just one. Now it's easier to find the bin, and she will remember more clearly which outfits she has. The memories are stronger.



Before: the way most of us work.

them to the present more often by keeping less.

Keep a photograph of the item instead.

Or keep one or two favorites in your collection, instead of all of them. One teenaged young woman had over 100 Beanie Babies. As she turned 16 years old, she wanted a

different, more hip bedroom design. We displayed 12 of her favorite Beanie Babies on a



After: the way we work best!

Find more ideas for weeding out in every season at www.OrganizeNH.com.





Coming Events

Need more inspiration? Hear Sue share techniques that work along with the latest philosophies on organization at the following events:

June 26, 2007

Time Management — Finding Time for Marketing, NH Business Builders, Micro-Credit NH

August 23, 2007 • 9:00 am – 12:30 pm

How motivation and a positive outlook can lead to overcoming inefficiencies and procrastination in business, Nashua Public Library, sponsored by Micro-Credit NH. Contact dhamel@microcreditNH.org to register.

October 10, 2007 • 6:00 – 7:30pm

Get Motivated. Get Focused. Get Organized. LaFlamme Business Center, Nashua. Contact Sue@OrganizeNH.com to register.



Hot New Product!

Fridgefile grabs all that paper



Imagine those endless streams of paper from clients, coaches, teachers, orthodontists, etc., organized right on your fridge instead of piled up on the counter! The Fridgefile, featured on QVC in January, was invented by mom Allison Mills, and adheres to your refrigerator with magnets. It has pockets for each family member, or each activity, however you prefer to slice it! There are options for a dry erase calendar or a plain board for messages and lists. To order, visit www.fridgefile.com.

Some prefer the do-it-yourself way!

With a treasure chest of tips, techniques and proven methods for achieving that goal, you can get and stay organized for life!

Winning at the Game of Life includes 3 CDs: **Hypnosis for Organizing, Stress reduction,** and **Hypnosis: Fact or Fiction.** It also contains a handy desk flip chart of organizing tips!

“The sessions allow you to focus on decluttering your life - and therefore your space - and allow you to relax. The decluttering tips are genuinely helpful, and the CD is very relaxing. I’m not sure if it is going to ‘cure’ me, but it did make me think about new skills and focusing on my objective.” Wendy Thomas, Cutting the Clutter Columnist, The Nashua Telegraph

For ordering and shipping information, visit www.OrganizeNH.com.

