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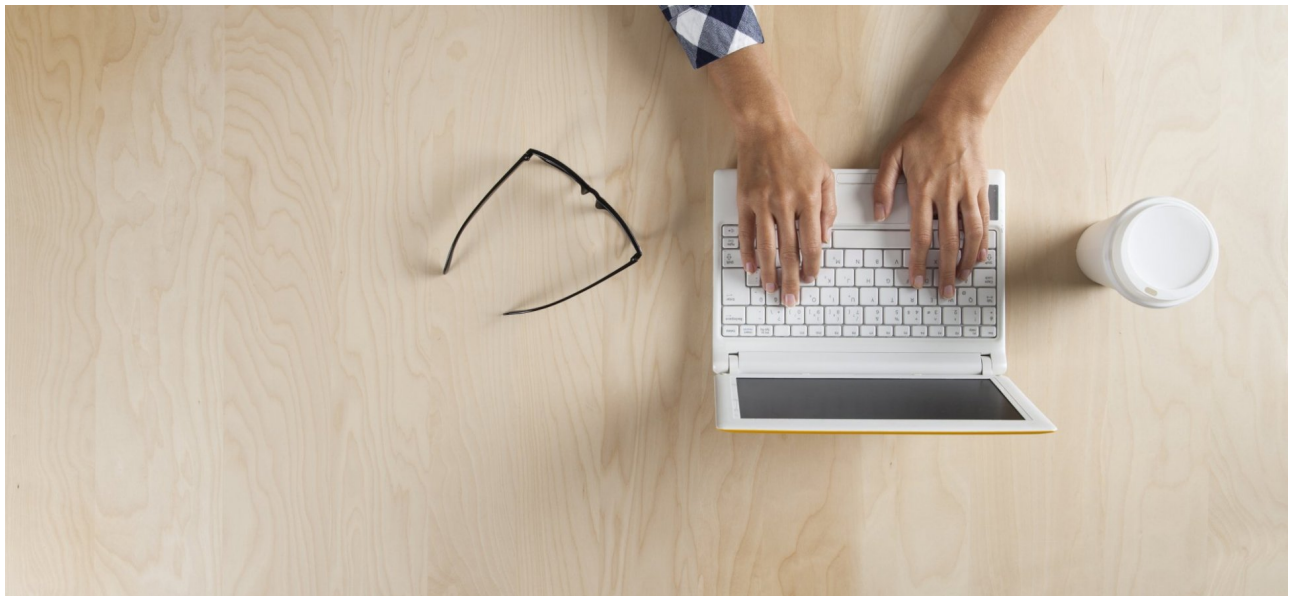
COLUMNIST

Never Leave Your Office Without Doing This 1 Thing

Your outer world is a reflection of your inner state, and if you're going to become the entrepreneur you've always wanted to be, you want to be sure they're both as organized as possible.



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When I was growing up, my mom always told me to "always begin with a clean surface." If we were cooking, we made sure the counters were clean first. If we were wrapping presents, we cleared off the table. Putting on makeup, we'd wash our skin. Always start with a clean surface.

Now, as an entrepreneur, I use that advice in my office. If you want to be your most efficient, you should, too.

When you're beginning your work for the day, make sure your desk is organized and free of clutter. When you're hosting a meeting, make sure the conference room is neat and clear. Your outer world is a reflection of your inner state, and if you're going to become the entrepreneur you've always wanted to be, you'll want to be sure they're both as organized as possible.

You'll think more clearly, focus longer, be less distracted and get more done.

This may seem obvious, but most people don't do this consistently simply because - well, it's easier not to. Shuffling papers can feel unproductive. Cleaning and organizing can be boring. Organizing things takes effort if it's not part of your routine. Even if you feel comfortable in a chaotic environment, you'll be more productive if your space lends itself to productivity.

Here are three ways to effectively get your space in order.

Clean your entire office in one fell swoop. Organize your office like you're cleaning the garage. Make it a project. Tackle the whole thing. Throw out what you don't need, and reorganize the things you do. Dedicate one drawer close to you to for daily files or current projects. Put the things you need on a weekly basis out of reach. Move anything you don't reference regularly into long term storage. Anything that isn't a priority right now doesn't earn primary real estate on your desk. If you're afraid that you're going to forget things that you put away, create a list.

Do an abbreviated version. If making office organization a big project is too overwhelming (or too discouraging), take it little by little. You might set a goal of simply keeping your desktop clear for now. You can worry about the files and cabinets later. Having a visually clean surface goes a long way toward clearing your mind.

Retreat to a new space. If you don't have time to organize your office, take the shortcut and move yourself instead of your stuff. Take your notes and head to a clean conference room to place a call. Or take your project and head to the library for the day. Try hiding out in a different room of your house if that space is cleaner and more open than your office. Even moving to the dining room or your kitchen table, if they're free of clutter, can give you a renewed sense of focus.

Once you've got the hang of it, be sure to maintain the work you've done. Try saving 20 minutes at the end of the day to clear your workspace. That way, the next day, you'll already be starting with a clean surface. Take a moment to notice the difference when you start off your day this way - clear, focused, and as productive as possible. You'll soon discover that clearing your space is a way of clearing your mind - and that's a strategy for much greater and bigger success in the rest of your business.

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