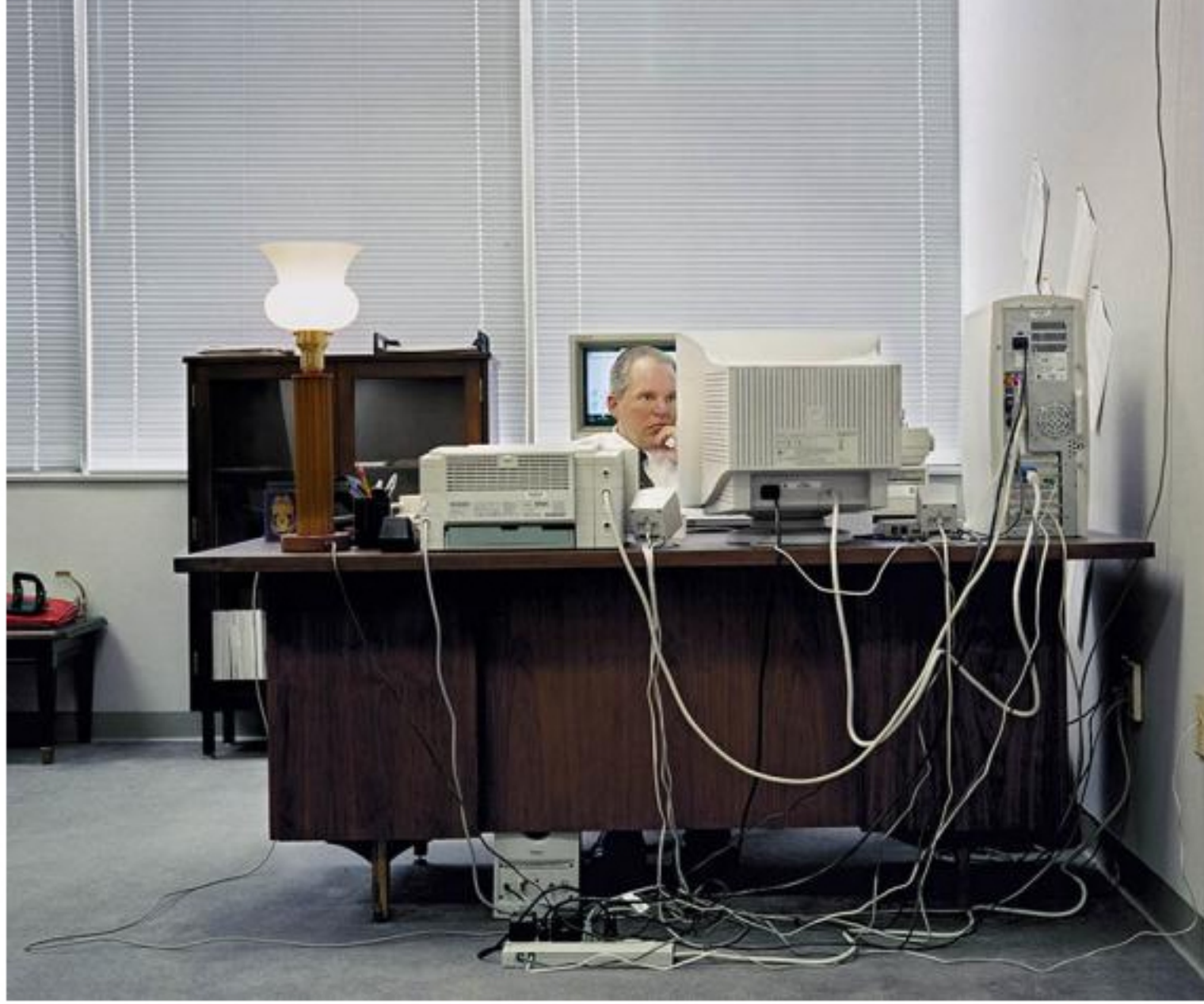


Work

Organize Your Way to Job Happiness

By Kara Baskin • April 1, 2015

A messy desk isn't the sign of a creative mind. It's a flaw that could cost you a promotion



"Physical spaces are a manifestation of our internal selves," says certified professional organizer Heidi Solomon, founder of organizing service P.O.S.H. And there are major downsides to a messy workspace, she says. "I've worked with clients who were denied promotions because a boss couldn't depend on them because they were so disorganized."

Promotions aside, clutter is simply bad for our workday brain. "All of those 'open items' in our workspace are similar to open windows on a computer. After too long, your computer begins to slow down and it's less productive. It's the same with our brains: Clutter makes us overwhelmed and keeps us from thinking clearly."

See also: [The 30 Minutes That Can Make You Like Your Job](#)

So take control of your desk—and hopefully your career. Here's how.

Step One: Think. Before you run out to Target for storage bins, figure out the reason for your mess and why you haven't dealt with it. Solomon says that most clutter is nothing more than a delayed decision, and the first step is figuring out the delay.

She says most people are messy for three reasons: circumstance, like not having time to regroup after a business trip; structure, or not having the right physical places to store things; or reluctance, such as not being able to part with an expensive product even if it's useless.

See also: [Make Your Office A Place You Want to Work](#)

Step Two: Prioritize. "Don't try to tackle it at once. Chunk it into manageable tasks, such as five projects by a certain date. Maybe the first task is collecting your files in one place. The second one is throwing away what you don't need. The third is separating things you need versus things you can file. Each time you do this, you're making progress," she says. Solomon recommends organizing at your peak time of day and scheduling it like a real meeting. "If you leave getting organized to the moment you have free time, it'll never get done," she says. Fair enough.

Step Three: Eliminate. "If something doesn't bring you joy, it has to go," says Solomon. Of course, some old files or handbooks might not bring joy but still are necessary. In that case, digitize them.

Step Four: Reconfigure. Figure out how you learn. Then you can reorganize your space to suit your strengths. Auditory learners should organize their time using a sound cue, like a timer, and their space by talking through their reorganization process out loud. Visual learners should seek out clear bins or color-coded files for papers. Kinesthetic learners are tactile; Solomon suggests working clockwise on a desk, picking up each item, and deciding if it should stay or go.

Step Five: Systemize. Remember what organization really is. "It's not about living a pristine life all the time," Solomon says. "It's about having a system so that when life happens and erupts, you can deal with it. When you need to reset, it should be an easy task, not a burden."

See also: [Windowless Office? Look At the Bright Side](#)

To that end, you can learn more about your organizational style with these three books Solomon recommends: *Getting Things Done*, by David Allen; *The Secret to Peak Productivity*, by Tamara Myles; and *Conscious Order: Clear Your Mind, Leave Clutter Behind*, by Annie Rohrback. They won't add to your clutter—promise.

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