

Desk Hacks to Boost Productivity

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Many employees work from home occasionally, but now many find themselves mandated to work from home in this new, unexpected era of social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This new work reality may be a breeze for some, but for others staying organized could become an issue. A few updates to your new workspace can invigorate and inspire you to be more productive than ever.

1. Clear the clutter

Research says that a workstation in disarray may inspire more creativity at the beginning of a project, but a clean desk leads to organization and the meeting of expectations over the long haul.¹ This means once you've moved on from brainstorming mode, it's time to straighten up and streamline to make way for the actual work at hand. Do this by filing paperwork, keeping only supplies you need on your work surface, and storing those you don't.²

2. Get green

We're not talking recycling, which should already be part of your daily routine. It's time to add a desk plant. Not only do plants contribute to air quality, the color green is actually believed to increase productivity.³ An added bonus? Weekly watering provides a nice mental break in your workday. Be sure to choose a low-maintenance variety that thrives in your specific lighting conditions. Some office policies don't allow for live plants, but remember, it's the color green that counts, so even a faux plant could do the trick.

3. Freshen up with mint

Essential oils seem to be everywhere these days, but have they made their way to your desk? Peppermint oil has been shown to increase both concentration and energy, and may even boost your mood.⁴ Who doesn't need that in the middle of a winter workday? Dab a drop on your wrists, neck or temples, or consider using in a diffuser. Office rules vary when it comes to the use of diffusers, so if you don't telecommute, but sure to check with someone from human resources first.

4. Play feel-good tunes

A recent study at Cornell University found when people listened to "happy" music at work, they were more likely to make contributions to the team for the greater good.⁵ While this study suggests the music be played at the office, it's a good note for headphone users as

well. What's on your playlist? Make sure it's full of workday music that boosts your mood and maybe, your positive impact on the team.

5. Take digital control

If you work, you're likely swimming (drowning?) in a sea of emails, updates and notifications. When your job allows, stop the insanity by setting rules for digital interactions. Did you know the average person checks email at least 15 times per day? When you consider one check takes you off track for about 15 minutes, this is a serious productivity killer.⁶ Dedicate specific times during the day to catch up on email, like in the morning after you've planned your day or made some progress on a project, and again later in the day. And set the Do Not Disturb setting on your mobile device to allow only those calls or texts from people in your Favorites list. All other notifications can wait until your daily digital window.

A few small changes can make a big difference in your work from home workday. Give ours a try and let us know how they work for you. And we bet you have a few of your own to share, too. We look forward to hearing your ideas (and maybe workplace selfie!) in the comments on our Facebook page and becoming more productive together this year.

References:

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6 Murphy, Mark. "The Way You Check Email Is Making You Less Productive." Forbes, Forbes Magazine, 19 Sept. 2016.