

The Disorganized Desk Test

If you feel less effective than you could be, take the following "Desk Test". You may discover that a messy desk might be partially to blame for any reduced productivity when it comes to organizing your work and making telephone calls.

Check off those statements that are true.

- Most of the paperwork on my desk is stacked horizontally.
- My in-basket is on my desk.
- My telephone is on my desk.
- I spend at least ten minutes each day looking for things.
- There is a stack of magazines or other reading material on my desk most of the time.
- Other people are reluctant to leave paperwork on my desk for fear it might get lost.
- I'm at least one week behind in my filing.
- It is difficult for other people to find a document on my desk if I'm not there.
- At any one time there are at least three unfinished projects lying on my desk.
- My desk is usually messy when I leave the office.
- In addition to paperwork, I keep at least five other items on my desk [e.g.: stapler, pencil caddie, paper clip holder, calendar, rubber bands, tape, self-inking stamps, cup, bookends, photographs, books].
- I have no set times or specific procedure for handling incoming mail.
- Sometimes I have paper arranged on the floor adjacent to my desk while working.
- I have more than one "junk drawer" in my desk.
- A ledge under my desk, a windowsill or the top of a filing cabinet is being used to store paperwork, at least temporarily.
- I do not use a Personal Organizer, Telephone Log Booklet, Voice Mail Log or any structured system for handling telephone calls.
- I keep some things on my desk so I won't forget to work on them.
- I print at least 50 percent of my e-mail messages.

- I make notes on scraps of paper, which frequently get lost or misplaced.
- I have no follow-up file system.

_____ Total number of items checked

Scoring:

0 to 4 true: You are above average in your organizing skills, and are probably experiencing a high level of productivity.

5 to 10 true: You will never win a “messiest desk” award, but your personal productivity is likely being hampered.

10 to 15 true: Chances are, you are spending a lot of time searching for things, shuffling paper, and becoming distracted. Your productivity is suffering as a result.

15 to 20 true: Your desk is a conversation piece and is affecting other people's productivity as well. Take action before it's declared a disaster area.