

Organising Your Office 10 Top Tips

1. Making your workspace simple to use

Ensure your desk is set up ergonomically to work comfortably, keeping all your day to day items at hand and any other items away in filing cabinets. Keep your PC files open that will be used regularly and have a quick reference file on your desk with your to do list, regular contact details, template forms etc as a good time saver.

2. Keeping your contacts

The ideal storage for contacts is online within your email software. If you keep hard copies, use a business card holder divided by surname/company name that has plenty of space for the contacts.

Storing contacts on your PC ensures you can search on a number of different fields in case you only have limited information to search by. You can also export the data to use for any mailings.

Keep as much information on a contact as possible. If you are only given limited details try using the following:

- Searching the internet is a great source for finding the missing information (perhaps the address via Yell.com or Google.co.uk).
- Taking details from an email signature they have sent you
- Asking colleagues working with similar contacts/companies, if possible. Sharing contacts online with colleagues is very handy if not breaking any confidentiality.

3. Tidying your office filing system

Take time each month to clear your filing cabinet to keep the number of files at a manageable level or expand if you are running out of space.

Remove files that you do not need any longer and are not required to be kept by law, and dispose of them by recycling paper or for confidential waste use a shredder or confidential waste bags.

Use hanging files in your cabinets or dividers within lever arch files to keep your system as clear as possible, labelling clearly by the most common header that you would look for (Surname, Customer name, Unique reference number etc). If you are filing by subject try to use headers that would be simple for another member of staff to identify with - file as if you were filing for someone from outside of your department. Implement this with your online filing also.

4. Setting calendar reminders

Adding your regular admin jobs to your calendar can plan your time effectively and act as a trigger for the jobs that perhaps have become so regular that they can easily slip your mind. It could be to check the stationery cupboard, clear out the filing cabinet or archiving your emails.

Add a diary entry with the details, preferably on your online calendar use o you can add an alert, recurring each day, week or month etc.

This can also be a good way to manage a large project, where you can block time in advance to ensure you have the resources to complete it on time and

know if you have the capacity to manage any ad hoc requests that might be asked of you.

5. Sharing best practice

Getting together with colleagues that have a similar administration role on a regular basis, perhaps an hour once a month, can be beneficial in a number of ways.

You can share useful tips and tools – this could be a template that someone has created that others can use.

It also gives you and your colleagues an opportunity to ask questions/raise any issues when you have been faced with a hurdle.

Being part of a team of administrators is a good way to build further relationships at work and to have a network of support.

6. Flagging your emails (sending and receiving)

Flagging emails for attention keeps them on your to do list, and you can add date reminders for it to notify you when an action is due. You may have an email that perhaps you cannot action for 2 weeks so it is an easy solution to make sure you remember to follow it up.

You can also apply this technique to emails you send that require attention by a deadline. Add a flag and date reminder to your outgoing email and your recipient will be given an alert on the date and time you have set – a great way to make sure they respond to your request.

7. Archiving your PC files/emails

Set a reminder to archive your files on a regular basis.

Emails

You can set up auto-archiving for your emails with set criteria which will manage this automatically. If you manage your email archiving manually, filter your emails by date to archive old emails, or by size to archive large emails.

You should try to save all attachments you need in your files and remove them from your emails on an ongoing basis to keep your mailbox size down.

PC files

You can archive your files on your PC to an external hard drive or to CD/DVD.

Move any folders or files that you no longer use on a regular basis but may need for future reference. Clearly label the back up with what items are saved, either by subject or date, and store in a safe place.

8. Managing your files centrally

Save your files centrally on a network when you want others to access them or update them. You can then send the link to your colleagues for update requests or for their reference. A link is a better than sending a large email attachment that will fill up their mailbox.

Storing files centrally may make them open to misuse, so set passwords on files that you want to be opened by a limited number of people, or set read-only passwords to avoid any amendments being made to your file.

9. Keeping on top of supplies

If you are responsible for managing office supplies that can be taken without your knowledge, for example a printer toner, leave some guidance next to any area where supplies are kept. This can be a note/poster on a wall asking colleagues to notify you if any supplies have been used so you can re-order. This can also be useful to guide them to you to log any problems with machinery so that the calls to IT are not duplicated. As you cannot always rely on being notified, complete a regular stock check of your supplies and always hold items that are in regular use.

10. Updating your team with systems

Keep your colleagues up to date with your systems. Set a reminder to send an email regularly with information on where files are saved, process updates and their responsibilities if necessary. It may be more useful in a newsletter format, or by attending a team meeting and giving your update. You can also take this opportunity to ask for feedback on how the office systems are working, gaining some constructive feedback to make improvements.