

### 5 Home Office Design Tips for Better Productivity

From Darrell Zahorsky, former About.com Guide

Is your home office design drab and uninspiring? Do thoughts of going into your office dampen your entrepreneurial spirit? It may be time to consider your office design and your productivity. You may not have the time or budget for an office design makeover, but a few simple ideas can go far in boosting your business productivity.

**Match Your Brand:** An important element of business marketing is the branding and image of your company. Whether you entertain clients or not, your office design should match your brand. Successful branding requires you to look and "feel" the brand. Having glossy business cards and a high-tech image but out-of-date office furniture and equipment, will make you feel like an imposter and you will have difficulty projecting your brand to customers.

**Turn Down the Volume:** Noise in your office environment can have a greater impact on productivity than you may think. According to Dr. Melissa Stöppler, About.com Guide to Stress Management, "...increased stress levels and increased stress hormone levels may occur even when you are not consciously aware of the stress." Low levels of office noise can impend your performance.

Take the necessary steps to pinpoint office noises. The gentle hum of the furnace next to your office can be dampened by a door or barrier. Move any noisy office equipment away from the walls and add carpeting, office dividers, or curtains to reduce noise.

**Bring in Nature:** Spending long hours in an unnatural environment can be hazardous to your health. We are biological creatures and need to experience nature for the best in psychological and physiological functioning. Use as much of nature as you can such as:

Locating your office in a space with windows if possible. Consider nature photos to make your home office a more pleasurable place. Add real plants to have fresh oxygen in your workspace.

**Create a Barrier:** Home office business owners will understand the difficulty of separating the company from the family. It is vital to build a home office design supportive of your own personal productivity. The temptation of a quick television break or snack can result in lost productivity and extra inches around your waist. It is best to designate a separate room with a door or closed space in the house for your business.

**Check Ergonomics:** The study of ergonomics or human factors looks at the interface between humans and machines, or in our case, small business owners and the office. Improper office ergonomic design can have a huge impact on productivity, injury prevention, and health. Consider these quick ergonomic checks:

- eyes 24-36 inches from computer screen and the top of your monitor should be below or at eye-level
- feet should be on a foot rest or planted firmly on the floor
- slightly reclined chair posture is best to reduce vertebrae pressure and minimize lower back pain

A cautionary note for start-ups. Many start-ups high on hope and low on cash will be tempted to spend on office design. Look before you leap. Begin with frugality in mind. If you want the fancy new office desk, set a revenue goal and reward yourself when you achieve it. The right home office design can help you reduce stress, improve productivity, and in the end, enhance the profits of your small business.

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