



Working atmosphere

> Elements that make for a great home-office environment

BY ALYSSA J. OON

THE workplace has evolved a lot in the last few years. The advancement of technology and a revolution in workplace culture have come to shape the modern office we know today – one that is completely different from the offices of not too long ago. In Malaysia, we can see this new design trend cultivated in offices such as Google, MindValley and KFit among others.

While part of this transformation is precipitated by today's more flexible working hours and conditions like having the option to work from home and other revolutionary working concepts that make for a happier and more productive workforce – the current state-of-the-art working spaces itself is said to benefit employee as well as employer in unconventional ways and means.

With that, we focus on home, a present-day work space and how one can get the most out of work time in this environment. For starters, it is advisable to designate a space or room in your home as your “office zone”. The area should not only reflect your personal style but also be decorated and designed to keep you focused and ultimately boost productivity. Here are a few tips:

CONTROL THE OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

It is important that the interior climate of your office space keep you focused while you are working. Ensure temperature controls of fans or air-conditioning are kept at a comfortable level, neither too high or low for interiors that are not too stuffy or chilly. Proper ventilation and natural sunlight is known to help keep one energised throughout the day. Therefore, consider getting

skylights or clerestory windows (series of windows on the upper levels of high walls), which both help elevate the height of the room for adequate ventilation while ensuring sufficient natural lighting. Where possible, avoid fluorescent lights as they cause drowsiness. Instead, have an adjustable lamp at your desk, to use when it gets dark.

USE COLOUR PSYCHOLOGY

Colour has a psychological effect on our emotions. Hence, the reason it is important that your home office bear the right hues to generate the right “qi” or energy force. It is not surprising that white is said to be the default colour to dress any office interior as it is associated with an



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open, airy feeling, especially when paired with natural lighting. Colours such as green and blue are calming and refreshing and reported to improve focus and efficiency. Try pairing both these colours for the ultimate creative dream team. Think light blue walls paired with green plants or a bright green rug for a room that is calming and refreshing for the soul. You can also consider yellow for the office as it is the colour of optimism. Use it as accents in your office setting, as in hanging art pieces, throw pillows or extra seating.

PERSONAL TOUCHES FOR COMFORT

According to experts, it is easier for you to get into the productive frame of mind if you are comfortable in your surrounding environment. Therefore, create an art gallery of family photos above your desk or have these displayed in your line of sight. Bring your personal interests into the office decor. If you love to read, then line your walls with shelves of your favourite books. If you have collected arty handicraft, souvenirs or memorabilia (that bring back good memories) from your travels, create a small display area for them. A home in Stockholm



PHOTO: THE CONTAINER STORE



PHOTO: BONNVILLE

above them. As for office stationery, clear plastic containers are a current favourite as it not only keeps stationery organised but makes it easier to locate needed items while adding bursts of colour in your office confines.

THE SPACE FACTOR

It is still possible to create a home office when you are short of space. Look for a small corner in any room of your home that can be used as a tiny office area. Invest in a sturdy table that can fit into the nook of your home, such as a wall-mounted table or even a vintage school desk, as long as it can hold your laptop or PC. Another alternative – make like designer Kate Collins and have your nightstand work double duty as your office table. To pull this off, Collins placed a clean, modern mini desk with a single drawer for storage and a simple wooden chair next to her bed. If crawling into bed is your number one weakness and you prefer to do work outside your bedroom, then consider a place that is mostly under-furnished and overlooked, eg. the hallway. Swedish property realtor *Entrance*, made use of a home's wide hallway and turned it into a work space using a simple vintage desk paired with a modern black chair. A large mirror is placed above the desk to reflect light for brightness, illuminating the space to help keep one energised while working. Do not forget to spruce up these small corners with modest-sized decorative items (for a more spacious perception). Build vertical shelves for extra storage to keep folders, books or as a display of knickknacks if required.

Sometimes a work area can be as simple as lounging on the couch with your laptop, depending on the kind of work you are involved in. However, a permanent place to sit down with other occupational elements do help improve focus and will yield better results work-wise.

uses a bright yellow open-shelf cupboard to display knickknacks while giving the small office a pop of colour. Place a daybed or chaise lounge in your work space to create a small nook where you can take short breaks or power naps. Then again, as every personal touch is “personal” according to the character of the individual, go with what motivates or inspires you and redecorate occasionally if and when you please.

ORGANISATION MADE PRETTY

Bulky metal cabinets are for corporate offices, or so they say ... Although they could portray that zen-effect or reflect your “preferred style”, in this case, we are looking at creative ways to make office organisation part of a pretty place. Start by implementing a command centre in your office where letters and magazines, calendars, to-do lists and cork boards jive. Some suggestions: get a fancy photo frame and use the glass to jot down daily tasks in whiteboard markers or go wild by creating an accent wall using chalkboard paint so that each day it can serve a different function (inspirational quote today – comprehensive to-do list tomorrow – like that). Pegboards are also a favourite, as *Bonville* blogger Steph Bond-Hutkin can attest to. A pegboard sits atop her daughter's room, with movable mint shelves that hold her books and stationery, while a to-do list and calendar hang

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