



It's Hard to Make a Difference When You Can't Find Your Desk: *Three new ideas you can immediately implement to find your desk again*

By Sara Caputo, MA
Founder & Owner, Radiant Organizing

There's a great book called "It's Hard to Make a Difference When you Can't Find Your Keys." Its author, Marilyn Paul, outlines seven steps to truly becoming organized. After reading it, I couldn't help coming up with my own title: "It's Hard to Make a Difference When you Can't Find Your Desk"!

When I go into a company to work with people on their organizational systems, I often get the question, "Where do I start"? If you're trying to organize your space to be more effective, I always suggest re-arranging your desktop as a starting place. Because the reality is that it IS hard to make a difference in your day if you can't find your desk.

The reasons behind this are quite simple: we become de-sensitized and almost blind to what's in front of us when we look at it everyday. The other reason is that often our workspaces were originally set up in a temporary way, not knowing if we'd stay in that particular cubicle or with that desk area when we started. Then... life happens and before we know it, we've been in the same workspace for three years and realize that: (1) we can't find our desks and (2) our physical systems are no longer working for us because very little thought was put into the original set-up.

Here are three fast and simple tips to try out. See if they make a difference in your day.

1. Rearrange

You know when you're playing Scrabble and you have your tiles all neatly organized into preliminary words on your tray? Then, you try to maneuver your mind to see how you can use those already orchestrated words with what has been played by your fellow players? You try to make sense of the words you've already created and it's hard to see anything else. This is the analogy I often use when I'm teaching a class on organization and I prompt everyone to go back to their desks and, as a starting place, just re-arrange their desk tops.

Your desktop is like that scrabble tray. It's hard to see it differently because your brain is so conditioned to the way it already is. Often when you just move one or two things around in your workspace you begin to see it differently and this creates a chain reaction. Take five minutes and think about your workspace. If you are sitting at your desk, look around at everything there and try to "see it differently." Move some things around. Move the pens to the other side of the desk, move that pile to the opposite side where the pens were and if possible, reposition your computer, even if it's just a few inches one way or the other. Once you do this, sit back and take another look at it. Do things look different? Do they feel different?

2. Map the Four Main Areas

There are four areas in a well-defined workspace: In, Out, Pending, and Working. Take a minute in your head to map out where these areas are for you. It doesn't mean that you have to have actual In and Out boxes but, rather, just an area where things are coming at you and things are moving away from you while you work. Half the battle is knowing what's coming in and what's going out. This way, there is a clearly defined area for where things "live." The Pending area is where you keep all of your items that are in-process and you are currently working on. And, of course the Work area is where you actually work. This is the "prime real estate" area right in front of where you are sitting. The goal is to keep this area clear unless you are working on something. Defining these areas is a good first step.

3. Build the "L"

The anatomy of a well-designed office starts with an "L-shaped" work area. If your space and desk doesn't allow for that, it's best to try to create it by using a small table or the top of a 2-drawer filing cabinet on the side of your main desk area. This way, you have computer space, work space and a side area for keeping other files, papers, and projects. The way in which your space is arranged on this very foundational level can make a big difference in terms of being able to open up an area in front of you for where you actually do your work.

Looks great – can it last?

Will your workspace stay "found"? If your new desktop is a result of your open mind and a 1-2-3 plan, you now have a fresh arrangement that will work for you. Like most workspaces – the kitchen, a wood shop, a crafts table - that we use to create things, your desk will get messy ...and that's okay. It's supposed to get messy because for many of us, that is where we "create" and "work". The great thing is that it only takes a few minutes' daily maintenance to have it back where you want it: FOUND!

About the Author:

Sara Caputo, M.A., is a dynamic productivity coach, consultant, and trainer based in Santa Barbara, California. She has diverse experience in group process facilitation, project management, and healthcare, and understands the challenges that disorganization provokes in clients' professional and personal lives. Sara's approach is facilitative and intuitive. She is the founder of [Radiant Organizing](http://www.radiantorganizing.com) and is passionate in her dedication to teaching clients, in workplaces and in homes, how to create more space in their lives for the things they value. Sara brings that enthusiasm to her popular and successful Conference Workshops and Breakout Sessions. Sara has helped numerous businesses, nonprofit organizations, and individuals garner measurable increases in productivity and creativity - and gain time to participate more fully in all levels of life.