

Decorating Your Professional Workspace

By Jackie Tiani

It does matter what you have in your 'personal' workspace, but there is no reason an office should be boring. You want your workspace to look like a place of full concentration. But keep in mind that the more you enjoy your office, the more you'll want to be there.

Focus - Offices and cubicles are designed for work - nothing you put in your work area should distract you from that focus.

Image - Your workspace should project your corporate image. Use the same standards for decorating your office as your style of work clothes. Accountants dress quite differently from artists. Likewise, an accountant's office should reflect a certain level of professionalism, but it would be acceptable for a graphic designer's office to be a bit pretentious.

Personality - Decorate your workspace according to your personal interests, so that others know exactly what space is yours. One of the most professional women I know decorates her cubicle with artwork & collectibles around the theme of horses. This captures attention and tells others something about her. My office is decorated in my company colors of red, black and gray. I'm a Disney nut, and some of my Mickey Mouse artwork and collectibles fit nicely with that color scheme. Moderation is key. You don't want your workspace to look like a hobby shop window.

Exposure - It's important to consider who will actually see your work space. You would want to be more cautious if your cubicle is in an area exposed to customers or clients. If your space is in a back room somewhere and you never have direct contact with a client or customer, your decorating style can be a bit more relaxed.

- Do personalize your cubicle with tasteful art and nicely-framed diplomas & awards, and appropriate, inspirational photographs. Family photos are fine, but keep them to a minimum.
- Do use plants to add color and life to your workspace.
- Do add a conversation piece - something to encourage co-workers to visit you, like a brainteaser or a candy dish.
- Don't fill your workspace with trinkets and souvenirs.
- Don't add anything that would cause distraction. If you find yourself mindlessly gazing at the fish in your aquarium, or if pictures of your vacation lead you to daydream about your trip, it would be better to remove them.
- Don't be offensive. Make sure everything in your workspace shows respect for people. Avoid jokes, cartoons and anything that someone might find offensive.