

Detox YOUR INBOX

A chaotic desktop can make you feel stressed out. Kick e-clutter to the kerb!



You might think you're comfortable with your disorganised digital workspace but experts say a messy desktop can be as detrimental to productivity as random piles of papers.

Why we do it

It's not because we're lazy – the need to clutter actually has emotional roots. Jo'burg life coach Kate Emmerson (www.kate-emmerson.com) says these 'may be feelings of obligation to keep that item, fear of eventually needing it, an inability to let things go, insecurity and even a tendency to hoard'. And Gerrit Cloete, founder and owner of Productivity Pit Stop (www.productivitypitstop.com), a company that specialises in maximising corporate productivity with digital solutions, believes indecision is partly to blame. 'Every piece of clutter asks you to do something about it – and that thing is, make a decision!' he says.

Take control

Clutter-free digital living promotes a feeling of professionalism and increased energy, says Emmerson. Here's how to sort out your spaces:

1 YOUR COMPUTER

Everyone needs to develop a system according to how his or her own brain files and finds things, says Emmerson. Organise a system of folders for downloads you may need in future, and a folder for items that can be trashed. If it's a download you will only need once, save it to an immediate-use-only folder. Clear this out regularly.

Cloete suggests using what he calls the 'file-forget-search' system. 'File and forget the stuff you want to keep, then search for what you need when you need it,' he says. This will indicate what you are using often, and what you aren't. Anything you haven't used in the last two months can be tossed. Remember: the more you store on your computer, the slower it will run and the more challenging it will be to find things.

2 E-MAIL

Categorise e-mails into groups. Cloete suggests using the following guideline categories: a) Action NOW, b) Action LATER, and c) Keep for reference. Zip through your inbox quickly and decide: is this e-mail for keeping, action now, action later, or can it be deleted?

3 SMSs

Unless the text holds useful information or makes you smile, trash it! Use time spent waiting in queues or waiting rooms to go through your messages and delete accordingly.

4 PHOTOS

Delete all duplicates and blurry images. Store the rest on a cloud service or external hard drive.

5 MUSIC

Listen to music on shuffle mode. When you hear a song you don't enjoy, delete it. Store music on an external hard drive or cloud if you're trying to free up space on your device.

6 APPS

Go through all apps and place the ones you use the least in a less-accessible position (towards the bottom or back of your app list).

7 SOCIAL NETWORKS

Go through your social networks on a weekly basis, and actively unfollow/unlike individuals, pages and subscriptions you no longer find interesting. ☺