

# Designing Your Space

By Anne-Grete Videbeck

Anne-Grete Videbeck's 20 years as an Executive Assistance gave her first class skills for organising and practical implementation of office set-ups and reorganisations. She is a professional organiser and certified paper flow consultant, as well as having completed a three-year interior design course. She talks about what it takes to create a new workspace or to redesign an existing one.



The average person spends 1 hour a day looking for something. This means the average person spends approximately 6 weeks per year looking for things. This time exponentially increases when the top of your desk and cabinets can't be seen for paperwork – much of which is not even related to the work in progress. Alternatively, you may have decided to make the

switch from a law firm to running your own practice. Either way, it can be difficult to know how to implement a change.



## Starting up

Take, for example, opening your own office. You will probably have spoken with a few of your colleagues who have done just that, but even so, it is one thing hearing about their experience and quite another to do it yourself. And you need to bear in mind that they may not have gone the best way about setting up themselves.

A small check list of what needs to be covered would include the following:

### 1. First of all, who are you?

- ✓ You will need to set up your company details
- ✓ Get a post office box
- ✓ Get your website and email address set up
- ✓ Set up bank accounts and credit cards.

### 2. Where will you operate from?

- ✓ Find physical space

- ✓ Decide on office layout
- ✓ Interior decorating incorporating and reflecting your brand
- ✓ Set up workstations
- ✓ The back office – copiers, scanners, printers
- ✓ Have wi-fi, internet access and phones installed
- ✓ Notify authorities and clients of changes
- ✓ Insurance.

### 3. Formalities for leaving your old firm

- ✓ Retirement contributions and plan
- ✓ Fees outstanding
- ✓ Employee benefits
- ✓ Personal and professional information
- ✓ Client files

### 4. Before the doors open

- ✓ Accounting
- ✓ Bank accounts
- ✓ Technology needs
- ✓ Filing system v Cloud storage
- ✓ Staff
- ✓ Office equipment and supplies
- ✓ Refreshments
- ✓ Research facilities
- ✓ Subscriptions and news alerts.

You need a plan to help you make the transition smooth and make your environment work for you. It should focus on three areas:

1. Head Space: The Systems you need in place;
2. Work Space: Design based on functionality;
3. Your Space: Personalisation. Making it a place you want to be.

However, you need to keep working while this is going on, and ensure the money is still coming in. This is where getting some professional help can be of immense benefit. A good planner will adopt a 360° approach by:

- conducting an in depth meeting, which should reveal how you personally like to work, and how you would like your brand to be viewed.
- making recommendations on office layout, the look and feel of the space and the practical systems required to get the office up and running.
- giving hands on assistance in pulling it all together, leaving you free to continue your day to day business.

Understanding how the business works, what is required and what could improve office systems and layout, is critical. Layered on top of this there has to be a feel for the look and feel that will suit your brand and productivity. It is the critical form and function synthesis that will make the difference, as the case studies below show.

### **Case study 1: Robert.**

#### *The Brief:*

Robert's biggest frustrations were not being able to find things, and wasting time and money looking for things. Seeing messy piles day after day Robert started to feel overwhelmed and confused, which caused paralysis and despondency that this wouldn't change. Along with running his business Robert was also involved in many research projects and he wanted a system to keep on top of these, while they were being progressed.

Robert wanted to feel peaceful, inspired and engaged when he walked into his workspace. He wanted it to be a place he felt refreshed and nourished and from which he would create amazing work.

#### *How professional planning helped.*

A lot of the paperwork had been sitting in piles for ages, and needed someone to come in and take charge of clearing it. The clutter on his desk and walls was removed and his desk was then systematically reorganised, so that he had new systems for his recurring files at arm's reach; current projects in files at hand; and a new diary management system set up.

#### *The Outcome:*

Robert found he approached each day with clarity, a sense of purpose and urgency to get through his work.

### **Case study 2: Katherine.**

#### *The Brief:*

Katherine had previously had help with organising aspects of her home and she then she asked for help her with her office.

Katherine wanted to create a clean, contemporary and functional office space for her boutique business. She wanted to feel in control of all of the paperwork that landed on her desk on a daily basis. She wanted an office that staff and clients could come into unexpectedly and that she felt proud of and enjoyed being in.

#### *How professional planning helped.*

Her office was repainted a warm inviting colour which represented the company brand. It was given a new layout had custom built shelving and desks installed. Her filing system was reorganised and some changes made to her diary management.

#### *The Outcome:*

Katherine feels great satisfaction walking into her office now, is proud of how it looks, and feels productive and in control of her paperwork.

### **Size doesn't matter**

Even the smallest of office spaces can be completely transformed by careful planning. At the very least, a streamlined environment can be created. If you then want something that reflects you on top of that, but a less cluttered you, again, getting help may be the answer for you. Your office should not be our prison. ⚖️

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