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Office Upgrades to Supercharge Your Career

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A desk buried beneath a mountain of paperwork doesn't make you look busy—it just makes you look sloppy. (Ditto for the Post-Its framing your computer monitor.) But a well-organized office isn't just about minimizing paper clutter. Rather, as an increasing number of top-level execs are learning thanks to the 3,000-year-old Chinese art of feng shui, rearranging your workspace can increase productivity, provide inspiration, and reduce burnout. "It also helps everyone feel more comfortable, making it easier to do good work," says Susan Painter, Ph.D., a design psychologist in Los Angeles.

Use our nine easy office upgrades to redesign your workplace and reignite your career. Nonbelievers might liken such modern feng shui to new-age business voodoo, but "it comes down to design psychology," Painter says. "Incorporating these principles into your office provides a daily reminder that you're a force in the workplace."



1. Assume the Power Position

Place your desk facing the door and, if possible, put it at the far end of the room. This angle welcomes new opportunities and speaks of authority and control. "Try to get a desk with a front panel to shield your legs; it provides privacy and sets a clear boundary between personal and public space," Painter says. Don't skimp on quality either. "High-end furniture reinforces the idea that your office makes money," says design psychologist Toby Israel, Ph.D., author of *Some Place Like Home: Using Design Psychology to Create Ideal Space*.



2. Face Your Audience

During negotiations, have visitors sit across from you at your desk, with their backs to the door. If consensus building is needed, go to an area with comfortable chairs and a round table. Always put yourself in the power position, with your back protected by a solid wall and eyes toward the door. "You'll feel secure and your visitors will be slightly uncomfortable, giving you the upper hand," says Alex Stark, one of the nation's top feng shui consultants.



3. Let There Be Light

Lighting should be subtle but effective, so keep the fluorescent overhead variety turned off. "Brighten your office with desk lamps and floor lamps instead," Stark says. Together with plants, lamps with full-spectrum incandescent bulbs are the easiest way to bring feng shui into an executive cubicle. "These lightbulbs simulate natural sunlight, which promotes energy and natural movement," he says.



4. Go with the Flow

A small water display, such as a fountain or an aquarium, can promote calmness, according to Israel. Feng shui also associates flowing water with prosperity and wealth. "When we see vegetation and water, we know that we can survive. It triggers a feeling of well-being," Israel says.



5. Think Green

Plants represent growth and have a calming, restorative effect by bringing in oxygen and removing carbon dioxide, Painter says. A well-tended tree in the corner shows stature, strength, and conscientiousness. Lemon balm is a low-maintenance choice for a windowsill, and researchers at Ohio State University have found that the scent of lemon improved people's moods and raised their levels of norepinephrine, a brain chemical linked to mood and behavior.



6. Clean Your Screen

A cluttered computer screen has the same effect as an untidy desktop: It acts like a traffic jam for productivity and success. If it's peppered with files, organize them into folders, and set the background to a nurturing color. Any earth tone will do, but azure is especially beneficial for building self-confidence and heightening intuition. Also, use an inspirational image for your screensaver. A flowing river, for example, enhances fortune and spurs original thoughts.



7. Organize Your Desk

Place pictures of your spouse or lover in the upper-right corner—the relationships area. Move your phone, business cards, and paperweights to the upper-left corner, which is the wealth section. Place your computer to the right-hand side of your desk, leaving the area in front of you open to work on projects. "Nothing new comes into your career unless you make room for it," says Carol Olmstead, author of *The Feng Shui Quick Guide: Everyday Tips to Improve Your Life*.



8. Find Your Hue

Neutral off-white walls allow furniture, artwork, and rugs to provide colorful accents. Red represents power and energy, and green stands for growth and fortune. "These colors will work for anybody," Stark says, "but they're particularly good for financial types. Creative people should focus on blue. Legal types, meanwhile, will benefit from yellow, gold, or brown, all of which have a grounding effect that makes others feel comfortable in your ability."



9. File Away Clutter

Make your cabinets and credenzas easy to access, which will allow you to store all but your most pressing projects out of sight. "Eliminating clutter will allow you to think more clearly and be a strategist," Stark says. An untidy workspace sends the opposite message. "A clean office also appears larger," Painter says, "and status is related to office size."