

## Tips on Professionalizing your Cubicle...



### Keep Hobbies At Home

It's a mistake to put pictures of your passion—skiing, surfing or cars—on your cubicle or screensaver. The office is serious business, not a playpen. You want clients to know that you're focused on them.



### Little Flourishes

Investing in little things such as desk accessories in the same style, folders and notebooks or a matched pen and pencil holder is money well spent because it shows that you're focused and serious about work.



### Just Say No To Touchy Topics

Politics and religion are great topics of discussion—outside work. Even if you're a collector, political buttons on your desk are inappropriate. Religion should be a private matter. Don't try to convert the heathen in the cubical next to you.

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## Business Basics Desk For Success

By Scott Reeves, 06.16.05, 6:00 AM ET

NEW YORK — You're dressed for success, but sit at a desk that undercuts your image as a serious, successful professional bound for the corner office.

A cluttered desk covered with inappropriate knickknacks and photos can be your downfall.

"Like going on a date, first impressions at the office are often lasting," says, **Deborah Wiener**, an interior designer and owner of **Designing Solutions** in Silver Spring, Md. "We also make quick judgments about work relationships. You want your desk to say: 'I mean business and I'm ready to move up.'"

### Get seven tips on how to professionalize your work space.

The key to success is to use desk and office decor to underscore your professionalism.

You can burnish your image by posting news clippings about industry trends or big names in your field in your cubicle or on your office wall. A magazine cover involving your company can be artfully displayed in an off-the-shelf frame purchased from OfficeMax (nyse: OMX - news - people ), Office Depot (nyse: ODP - news - people ) or Staples (nasdaq: SPLS - news - people ) or home improvement stores such as Lowe's (nyse: LOW - news - people ) or Home Depot (nyse: HD - news - people ). Photos of staff get-togethers, awards ceremonies or other special work-related events are also appropriate.

If your company does business overseas, consider hanging up a large photo of the office in England, Germany, Japan or China and landmarks from that country to underscore the size and scope of your company.

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### Go Blue...Or Gray

"True blue" has passed into the language meaning loyal, faithful and trustworthy. You can use the connotation to your advantage when choosing the color for walls and the carpet in your office. Dark gray is also a good choice. Stir the pot with seating or an accent wall in red, orange or bright green to show that you're on the leading edge of your field.



### Keep It Clean

Keep your desk organized. You want clients to know that you have everything, especially their file, at your fingertips. Keep personal items in a separate file tucked in a desk drawer.



### Focus, Focus, Focus

A couple of personal pictures on your desk or office wall are fine. Most items should be directed to your field. If you hold a patent, a large, framed drawing of your gizmo underscores your inventiveness and seriousness. Magazine covers relating to your company and work-related photos are also a good bet.



### Let There Be Light

If your cubicle or office is on an interior wall and gets little natural light, consider getting a full-spectrum desk lamp. This will ease eye strain and the warm glow will set your work space apart.

## Desk for Success

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Photos defining your company's product or service can highlight your desk and even the office's reception area. If you're a caterer, consider pictures of some of the fancy spreads you've created for weddings, business meetings and other high-profile events.

Your screensaver might display your company logo or mission statement or relate to the type of work you do. If you're an engineer, going retro with a slide rule on your flat panel screen is a good way to spark comments.

Your cubicle shouldn't be cluttered with goofy photos of you and your friends painting the town red in exotic places. Go easy on mementos and other personal items.

You don't have to be politically correct up to the eyeballs to know that beefcake and cheesecake photos are wildly inappropriate for your cubicle, screensaver or private office. Even if no one objects – and someone almost certainly will – you don't want to cast yourself as an adolescent.

Clients need to know you're focused on their needs. It's fine to keep a small photo album of family shots tucked in a desk drawer to share with co-workers, but you don't want to overdo the personal shots with clients or prospective clients, who may walk through the office as they size up the company.

It's also wise to keep after-hours items out-of-sight. If there's no closet available, tuck your gym bag under your desk and prop the tennis racket up in the corner behind the chair where guests will sit.

At staff meetings, Wiener suggests showing up with a portfolio and a metal pen to underscore your seriousness and attentiveness. Such a pen will cost a little more than a fistful of throwaway plastic ballpoint pens, but it's still cheap enough that losing it won't be a tragedy. Remember: Brushed brass always beats brightly colored plastic.

A desk lamp is a good way to make your work space stand out in a large room filed with cubicles or a wall lined with offices. Use something other than an incandescent bulb to create a bright, warm glow--and all the good connotations that go with it.

This assumes, of course, that you cleaned up your desk and keep it organized.

"You can do this on a shoestring budget," Wiener says. "It's worth it to make sure that the first impression you make at work is a good one."