Low Work Productivity? A Messy Home Might Be to Blame
Take these six steps to reorder your home so you can get back to business.
BY BETH LUBERECKI

Is your closet a mess? Are you always hunting for your keys or wallet when trying to get out the door in the morning? If "disorganized" or "chaotic" are the words that best describe your home, your productivity at work may be suffering, too.

"If you're dealing with someone in business and they're scattered, it's usually because they're overloaded," says Marla Ottenstein, owner of Professional Organizer Florida in Naples. "They have a lot of things going on at home, and that carries over to work. Your well-being at home really reflects upon your productivity at work."

A lack of order where you live can be particularly problematic for people with home-based businesses. "What I have personally experienced is that people who work out of their homes tend to be a little more disorganized than others because home and workflow over," says Ottenstein.

If the disarray of your dwelling is impacting your ability to close a sale or crunch your company's numbers, there are some easy steps you can take to control the clutter. Here are Ottenstein's top tips for getting more organized at home so you can be more effective at work.

Identify the source of the problem
Too many catalogs or store emails clogging up your mailboxes? Get yourself off their mailing lists. If you can determine what's causing some of your disorganization difficulties, you can tackle the problem more effectively.

Enlist the whole family
"People who are disorganized try to take everything on themselves and manage it all," says Ottenstein. "I really think that organization is a family effort." She says kids who are old enough should be making their own beds
and taking on other chores and responsibilities to help the home run smoothly. "So many parents these days are afraid to teach their kids how to do things," she says. "But you can't do it all."

Start your morning off right
An orderly closet means it won't take you forever to find something clean and appropriate to wear to work. "People waste an average of 20 minutes a morning in a disorganized closet," says Ottenstein. "You can do the math; it adds up." The same kind of thinking holds true for spots like your pantry. If it's neat and tidy, it's easy for everyone in the house to find breakfast.

Live with less
Too much stuff means too many choices to make and too many things to corral. "Have only the things that you use, that you need, and that you like," says Ottenstein. "If you don't play golf anymore, why do you have golf clubs? If the kids have outgrown something, it's time to say goodbye."

Don't overbuy supplies
If you work from home, you might have a tendency to overstock your office. But you don't really need to have cases of printer paper or hundreds of paperclips on hand. "What you need is not what you think you need," says Ottenstein. "You don't have to have enough supplies to last your lifetime. Just buy one backup."

Simplify your systems
If it's hard to make your bed in the morning or to keep control of your paperwork, it could be because you've made things too complicated. Make it as easy as possible to put things away and see what you already have. Ottenstein, for example, likes to store office supplies in small, clear plastic containers labeled with their contents. "When things aren't visible, that's when you tend to buy more because you don't realize you have it," she says.