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Personalized Work Environment

Elevating Your Home Office for the New WFH Reality

By Dave Adams

Over the past year, COVID-19 has caused many hardships around the world. But for better or worse, the mandated lockdowns and quarantines had most Americans shifting their focus back on home life, and subsequently, on home decor. Even with some public spaces and corporate offices slowly opening again, most of us are still in a quasi-holding pattern until the vaccine is widely available and administered. So with good reason, our homes have become our dominant places of living, working, entertaining, and relaxing.

Early in the pandemic, the most immediate and dramatic shift was in the need for home office spaces to meet the sudden demand for work-from-home (WFH) and remote learning environments. Even post-pandemic, the way that people work will likely shift, and there's no sign that they'll be returning to the old way of doing business anytime soon. In fact, according to Upwork's "Future of Workforce Pulse Report" (released in December 2020), 1 in 4 Americans will continue to work from home in 2021, which is an 87% increase from pre-pandemic levels.

Also, various news reports show that large companies such as Adobe, Amazon, Microsoft, and others will make some WFH positions long-term or even permanent. WFH has forced people to evaluate their home office spaces, or lack thereof. In recent months, the key to working from home for many has been creativity and creating workspaces where there was no space.

However, as people adapt to this new normal, they are now searching for more permanent solutions, which is translating into an investment in high-quality home office furniture and décor that is both functional and aesthetically pleasing. So what is driving consumers' purchases, and what should you consider before you acquire new office furniture? Below are some considerations when buying furnishings for your home office HQ.

Space Matters

Not everyone has the room for a dedicated home office; the new corner office may be the corner of your bedroom, or a space carved out in the kitchen or living room. In these cases, smaller-scale desks and writing tables are not



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only a space-saving solution, but also they are an economical way to make the most use of available space.

However, if you do have the space and the budget, upgrading to a modern, electronically powered standing desk could provide your home office with a unique combination of function and style that also promotes healthy movement while working. A standing desk can also add versatility to your office setup and even allows for collaborative worktime or a shared workstation.

Versatility Counts

With mom, dad, and — in some virtual schooling cases — the kids working from home, it's understandable that not everyone may get their own dedicated workspace. For this reason, there's been a surge in purchases of small and mobile laptop tables that allow people to work productively anywhere in the home. Modular office furniture is also ideal for multi-use spaces or where a unique footprint is at play. Adding shelves and cabinets to an adjustable office system allows you to customize your office furniture to fit your situation, your space, and your needs.

Features Are Important

Technology has shifted what consumers need from home offices today, as large computer towers and desktop units have given way to sleek laptops and tablets. However, for an efficient and organized home office, consumers still need integrated storage for supplies and accessories, especially to reduce clutter in small spaces.

But even with today's smaller, more powerful technologies, there is still a plethora of cables and cords that are used for charging or in-use power. For this reason, it is important to look for desks and other office furniture that have built-in wire management to keep your workspace clean and clutter-free. Drawers that incorporate wire holes allow you to charge devices while keeping your desktop tidy.

Design Matters

The home office aesthetic is distinctly different than that of the corporate world. In your typical corporate space, you may spend most of your workdays in a standard, cookie-cutter cube farm. Yet the consumer typically demands greater style when it comes to the home office, so fine details like richly finished wood surfaces, scratch- and glare-resistant desktops, and premium hardware are expected.

Your home office gives you the chance to create a space that better fits your personality, while also blending into the decor of your home. Today's WFH consumer really wants a space that they look forward to captaining each day and being seen in during Zoom calls (without the need for background blurs or virtual environments). While we eagerly look forward to emerging from this pandemic, now is a great time to evaluate your home office space. And whether you return to your corporate space in the future or stay working from home, you'll have a functional and aesthetically-pleasing space to call your home (office) for years to come. **HBM**

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