

It's Here Somewhere: the Effects of Storage Methods on Job Performance (Excerpt)

The following is an excerpt from the Herman Miller Research Summary: It's Here Somewhere: The Effects of Storage Methods on Job Performance (©2003).

“Reevaluate Storage

Reconsider the value of information in the primary work zone. If it doesn't support work done today, tomorrow, or the next day, it may be better off somewhere else. Most organizational experts' first recommendation is to get all archival storage and as much intermediate storage as possible out of the workstation. Files, supplies, resource materials, and anything else that is not used on a daily basis can also be organized and stored more efficiently in another location. Time-management consultant Jeffrey Mayer says that 60 to 80 percent of the papers he clears from his clients' desks can be filed in the wastebasket with no ill effect. Some experts in the field of organizational behavior and design advocate a general rethinking of the office that includes relocating much of the filing that is duplicated from workstation to workstation into shared libraries or resource centers. Many companies have developed information systems that give employees access to archival material through their computer, on shared servers or an intranet. And still others offer off-site archival storage.

Rethink Collecting Strategies

David Kirsh, of the Department of Cognitive Science at UC-San Diego, describes his theory of information collectors, which includes just-in-case accumulators who want it all and plan to keep it forever. They expect to need it, someday. As a result, information piles up with no limit, and the organizing and retrieving strategies get more taxed. There are also just-in-time accumulators, who get the information they want when they need it and tend to discard it easily when finished. However, their grasp of the material may be shallow, especially if it is information that needs to be developed or understood over time. Waiting too long to decide on an item's value can backfire. Almost all of the 25 percent of materials purged by the group Whittaker and Hirschberg studied was unprocessed information that had never been properly evaluated.”

For the complete text of this research summary, please CONTACT Thomas Interior Systems.