

What Does Your Workspace Say About You?

You have been facing a challenge at work, but at least you can laugh about it when you find a similar situation illustrated in a cartoon. The cartoon summarizes your frustration with management so well, you're thinking of posting it by your desk.

Before you do, you may want to give some serious thought to the message you will be conveying to everyone who comes by your workspace.

According to **Jo-Ellan Dimitrius**, PhD, workplace "props" can offer significant clues to an employee's personality, values, and level of commitment to the job.

Although most workers have little control over such matters as furniture style or carpet color, many companies allow employees freedom in how they decorate their workspace.

Dimitrius, author of [Reading People](#), says workplace items such as calendars, photographs, and reading materials are particularly revealing because, with so many choices available, they provide the best opportunity for individual statement.

While you may not label others based on such items, others may be making judgements about you. After all, a **Dilbert** day planner communicates different messages than a motivational calendar featuring slogans about teamwork and perseverance.

And what if an employee has no props? In my experience, employees who choose not to have workplace props may see their position as temporary. Fewer props make for easier packing when it is time to move on.

Clutter also communicates a message. Says Dimitrius, "A messy, disorganized desk usually points to a messy, disorganized person, and never mind the standard assurances to the contrary."

However, if you juggle a variety of projects in a fast-paced organization, some clutter is probably expected. To paraphrase a poster I saw in a busy office, an empty desk may be seen as a sign of an empty mind – or at least a mind that isn't facing many professional challenges.

Because what is acceptable varies from one workplace to another, I suggest you take a look at the messages you are communicating through your workspace. You may just decide the best place for that controversial cartoon is at home.

by Tag Goulet

Tag Goulet is Chief Executive Officer of FabJob.com, a company that publishes e-books on how to break into a "fab" job. Visit www.FabJob.com for more informa

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