

IRENE'S *Insights*

Meeting challenges of a home office fix

By Irene Woodworth

Do you have a home office or an area dedicated for study for the adults or children in your home besides the kitchen table? There are a variety of ways to meet the needs and styles for you or a family member. I am going to share with you various

challenges that I experienced to accomplish my new home office make-over and redesign. With some planning and thinking outside the box, we came up with some interesting solutions to meet this challenge.

My home office desperately needed a makeover. Since caregiving for my parents took top priority, I had my office relocated to the dining room, a corner of our great room and a quarter of our four-car garage.

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After both of my parents passed away, I finally decided it was time to use our spare bedroom as my office location once again.

I am going to share the process of the problems I faced and how I solved them to meet my needs in my reorganized and more functional home office.

After figuring out my floor plan that included my desk, storage cabinets and work surface, I decided on my color scheme of tan, white and black, accented with my pops of magenta and apple green to match my logo colors. Pre-planning will help you save lots of time and money for your update.

I needed a desk. I had a wrought iron and wood desk that had a few shelves that I really liked and used for a couple of years. I thought I would later use it in my new space. Unfortunately, it was a half inch too wide to go through our hallway. So, I realized I would need to think about a plan B. I thought of an old trick of making my new desk in an economical style by using a door and placing it on top of my two black two-drawer file cabinets. We decided to visit our nearest Habitat for Humanity store for a hollow core door already painted white. Otherwise, I would need to paint it before I could use it as my work surface. You never know what you will find at those places! We found one that was perfect.

I have learned it is a good idea to walk the aisles and look for what we need. I was surprised when I found two custom-made file cabinets in a lighter wood grain. They each had an additional pencil drawer above each of the two file drawers. They were definitely custom built for an office. I measured them and realized that they may be a better solution for my desk bottom. We purchased them and used them for my new “desk.”

Storage solutions: A few years ago I found some black lateral file cabinets (formerly used for medical files) at one of my local thrift stores. The store was going to recycle them since they were taking too much floor space. I bought three of them for 24 dollars. I knew that they could be utilized as an excellent storage solution for all of our paperwork and class materials I used for The Color & Redesign Academy. The only negative was that they were black with an old brown grain print on the front facings of the drawers. I thought I would paint them later on.

I decided it would be better and more attractive to find some contact or wallpaper that would be a more stylish and updated look. I found some stylish tan and white contact paper at my local big box discount store that I used to cover the drawer facings.

A tip: I have sometimes seen these metal cabinets used creatively in children's rooms. They were painted in fun and coordinating colors to match the décor, and they replaced a dresser and gave the room a more industrial vibe and better function. The pull-out drawers are a great place to store clothes, socks and linens.

Closet space: I had another “opportunity” to address. I had two display and storage cabinets that I wanted to place on each side of my new desk. They fit best adjacent to the closet bi-fold doors that did not open all of the way. I decided to remove them and store them until I needed them in the future. I found a tan and white shower curtain that perfectly matched my new office colors of tan and white. I hung it on a white tension rod with silver chrome-style shower curtain hooks.

Other tips:

- Instead of using our closet for hanging clothes, I had my son add

some simple shelves to go with the other ready-made closet organizers that came with our home. I knew these would be great for the various storage containers that I store my various supplies in.

- Think outside the box and utilize your closet as a library or an area for a simple desk if you are limited in space. It can also be used to store kids' toys or books in some plastic bins or baskets.

- “Have a place for everything and keep everything in its place.”

Window treatments: We found a brushed nickel curtain rod and some tan and white damask side panels to frame the window to soften the effect of all of the hard surfaces in the room. You may opt for no window treatments. I just knew I would need some accent side panels over my window blinds.

Work space: I am able to move my laptop computer off to the side and use most of my work surface on the door “desktop” when needed. I have a wonderful industrial metal table that has been great to use for making various art projects, but it was too large to fit in my floor plan. I had to figure out another solution for this space. We had a simple parson's style table with a glass top that I have used in various locations in our home. However, when I would work on it, I would place a heavy-duty white melamine board on top of the glass. This was more durable and even extended the work surface.

Another tip: You can find interesting materials at your local home improvement store. Make sure to check in the back of the store where they have damaged or imperfect wood pieces that can be cut to fit your dimensions if needed.

Personalize your space: I love to work with color. I knew I would use accents of magenta and apple green in the room. I found a wonderful picture at a thrift store that included those colors and made a bold statement in my office. The storage containers and accent pieces also needed some color. I kept the office in neutral colors as a base and added various pictures and accessories that reflect my personality as accent colors to make the space coordinate. I often ask my clients, if we blindfolded one of your friends and they were taken to your space, would they know it was your home or personal space?

Pet space solutions: Our little dogs, Jack and Jill, like to be as close to me as possible. I decided that we would have a space in our open closet for them to have their bed crates. They can either go in them while I work or we place a small blanket on the floor for their naptimes.

Tip: A stylish and comfortable pet bed can be used instead of a blanket if your pet likes to be near you as you work.

Hopefully these ideas can stimulate you to create an organized and functional office space that will meet your family's needs. ●

Irene Woodworth is known as “Idaho's Color Lady” and is founder and CEO of Redesign Boise. She is a national redesign award winner, motivational speaker, certified redesigner and color consultant, and instructor on redesign and color. She has a degree in education and interior design and has taught various decorating and color classes throughout the country. For more information, visit RedesignBoise.com.



Irene Woodworth's home office was restored with the clever use of items found at thrift stores, as well as some added artistic flourishes. Irene's dog, Jack, seems to find the space comforting — and Irene is happy with it too. (Photo provided by Irene Woodworth)