

Some tips for constructing a good home/office

By DEAN JOHNSON

Just a couple years ago, when the boss said, "It's time to relocate," you could expect a move to another city or state. Today, relocation often translates into a move away from the office to your home — giving a new meaning to the words "home office."

Because most houses were built before the home office boom, today's typical home design may not accommodate special workplace needs, like soundproofing, wiring, lighting and storage space. If you plan to build a home office any

time soon, here are some suggestions to improve your new work environment.

SOUNDPROOFING — Neither you nor your client needs to be distracted by the dog barking or baby crying. If possible, convert a remote room of the house or a dry part of the basement into your office. Or, if you are building from scratch, consider separating the home office from the rest of the house altogether, including a separate entrance, or construct the office above the garage.

No matter where your office is located, installing insulation in the frame cavities of inte-

rior walls and floors is one of the best ways to absorb unwanted noise. For the best sound-absorption performance, use 3 1/2-inch-thick fiber glass insulation for two-by-four walls and in floors above and below the office. The additional sound-absorption value for insulation thickness higher than 3 1/2 inches is minimal.

To further control noise, add resilient metal channels between drywall and studs or joists. Resilient channels break the sound-vibration path through a wall's or ceiling's wood studs or joists, thereby keeping the office quieter. Once unfaced insulation is installed between the

studs, nail the channel directly to the studs or joists, approximately 24 inches on center and running perpendicular to the direction of the studs or joists. The drywall is then fastened to the channel.

WIRE FOR THE FUTURE — Install an adequate number of phone lines and electrical jacks to keep the room flexible. You always should consult an electrician to be sure there are enough circuits to handle your electrical needs for both now and the future. If you plan to centralize your desk, ask the electrician to wire outlets in the middle of your floor to eliminate stretching cables and phone lines across the floor. Remember to forecast for the future. Don't overlook the importance of such technologies as video conferencing. While video conferencing systems are somewhat cost-prohibitive today, more affordable systems with improved viewing are around the corner. Although it's unclear how these new video systems will be wired, by incorporating both category 5 computer wire and coaxial cable into your wiring scheme, it is a safe bet you won't need to rewire your office down the road.

LIGHTING — Make sure your office has good lighting, both artificial and natural. A lighting store can help you customize your lighting needs. If it's not already part of the room, I recommend installing a window or skylight in the office. Not only does a window or skylight provide an excellent light source, it offers psychological benefits as well.

STORAGE SPACE — You never can have enough storage space; and as you prosper, so do your filing needs. A couple of standard three-drawer filing cabinets can swallow the room's space pretty quickly. A craftsman can customize your storage space, matching your furniture scheme. Surprisingly, customized cabinets can be less expensive than purchasing manufactured cabinets or files.



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Liberate your kitchen

How do you make an apartment or house a home? The easy answer may be "move in," but how do you create a space and style that reflect your tastes while enhancing your quality of life?

"Style is not irrelevant — far from it — and our lives would be much less fun without it. But no style works well unless you pay some attention to what's underneath — the bare bones of structure, design and fixtures," says international home-design expert Terence Conran in his book, "The Essential House Book: Getting Back to Basics". "The mission of this book is to help you to understand the myriad options that are open to you in the design and fitting out of the space in which you live."

Conran, founder of the chain of Habitat stores now in more than 20 countries, is also the owner of the Conran Shops in London and Paris and, as an avid cook, is author of books on kitchens and dining, as well as books on bedrooms and baths.

Conran brings a simplicity and common sense to home design and focuses on key elements that make a home work the way it should — efficient and flexible organization of space, good lighting, well-planned storage, and sensible surfaces and materials.

The kitchen is the most important space in the whole house, according to Conran — a place where you are sustained both physically and emotionally. The demise of the dining room — one of the most dramatic changes during the past century in the way people inhabit houses — parallels the renaissance of the kitchen (eating or lounging in the kitchen) from a working-class necessity, or bohemian eccentricity, to the accepted norm that suits an informal but busy lifestyle.



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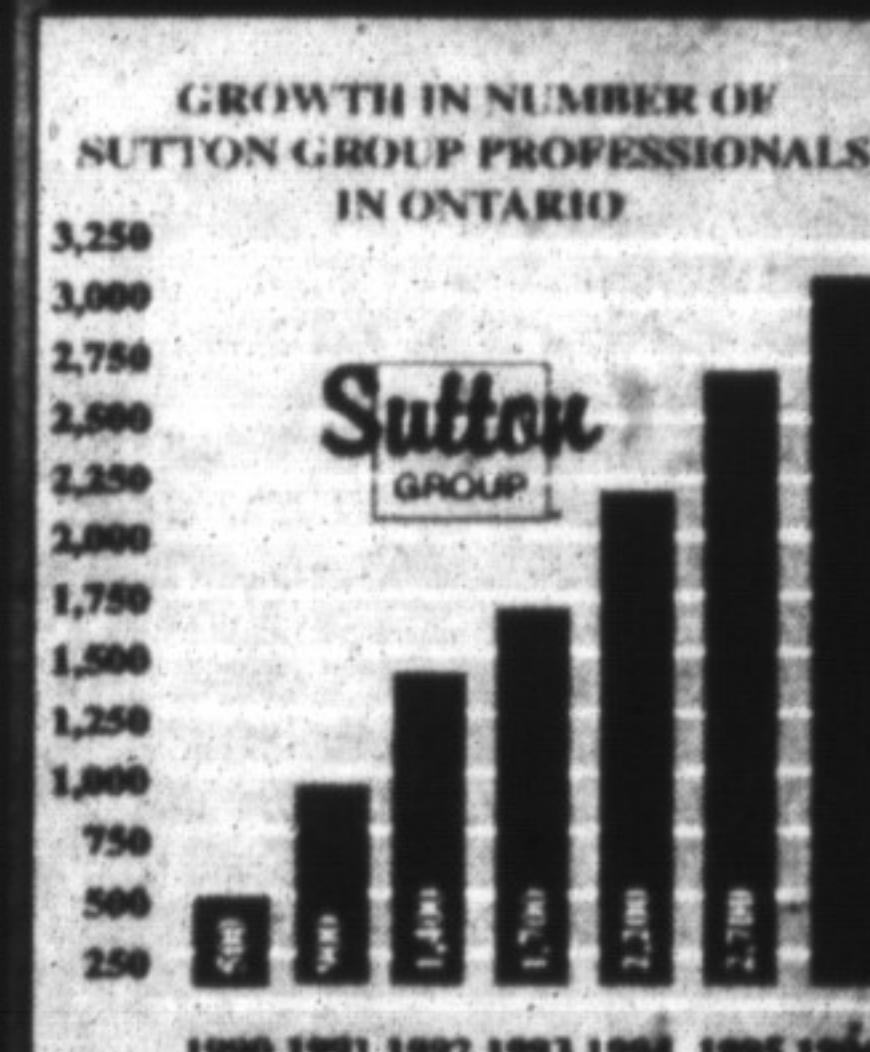


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