

EXERCISE

Tim's Office Transformation



Time: solo one hour thinking and planning, one to six hours moving and sorting



Setup and materials: pencil and a blank notebook dedicated to home if possible



Good For: individuals, families, people who share working or living spaces

Framing:

Clearing may be in the air this time of year. We're in our homes and offices more in the winter, the nights are longer, we want to nest in a cozy and comfortable space.

This exercise emerged in January 2021 in conversation with Tim Hallbom. He was in the process of thinking through his office, editing his physical environment. He came up with an assignment for himself using these categories to evaluate any object in a room. It either:

Must stay,
Must go, or
Must move.

Once you know what stays, you choose an object's optimal location for its function. You ask, "Where do I use it? How do I use it?" Then you listen. Sometimes it takes a little pondering, but the place for this object will become clear.

When things are in their right place it reduces friction. Your own energy is diverted to more interesting uses. You don't have to take a dozen extra steps and reach and bend to do routine tasks.

And you can find things. Ahhhhh, you can find things immediately!

Tim's process is in the steps below, embellished with his permission. In our conversation we were reminded of the Marie Kondo question, "does it spark joy?" In her model, you go through your belongings by category. The Kondo method is great for details. Tim's is different, it's a big picture exercise.

Steps:

1. **Look around** whichever room(s) you want to transform. Make notes about the function(s) of the room. Identify what you have stored in it. Write down any unique space considerations. (e.g., a fold out couch would need empty floor space.)

2. **Identify what Must Stay.** This is the joy sparking stuff. If an object might be kept but moved to another place, take it out of the room for now to a temporary location of saved items.
3. **Identify what Must Go.** Take it out of the room. Now. Even if you remove it to an inconvenient location. (It's probably good if it's in an inconvenient location, or better yet in your car to be removed permanently.) However you do it, take it out of the space that you are transforming. Do it now, immediately.
4. **Identify what Must Move.** Your space is already emptier. If something is to move **within the room**, leave it. If it's feasible, put it in a corner of the room so you can rethink its location. If it will move **out of the room** take it out of the room to your temporary storage or to its final location.
5. **Identify what you spend most time doing** in this room. Now the fun part begins. How can the primary function of this room be made efficient and beautiful and inviting? Set up that single function in the room first, before adding anything else.

You might have a large space available for overnight guests (who are rarely there) while your tiny desk (that you use every day) is cramped in a dark corner of that room. Rethink! Find the brightest, most pleasant part of the room and claim it as your own.

6. **Add objects to the room by function** until all the necessary uses of the space are met, including storage. With storage, how often do you access it? Choose how convenient an object is based on how often you need to get it out and put it away.
7. **Celebrate.** Stand or sit in the middle of your new room and put your phone on video. Slowly turn to see every bit of your transformed space. Notice the energy the new space gives you. Enjoy the result of your work and thought. Light a candle, buy some flowers, open a bottle of bubbly, celebrate.

Tim's Office Transformation

The space:
Primary function: Secondary function(s):

Must stay

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Must go

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Must move

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Enhancements –
Function

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Aesthetics

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