

CREATING A POSITIVE OFFICE ATMOSPHERE

INTRODUCTION

In I Timothy 3:1 we read, *“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.”* Did you ever think of your job as being “noble?” It is a position of leadership and ministry, and it is our desire to help you set the right atmosphere in your office. It will enhance all that you do.

Your office is a place to do some or all of the following: study, work, counsel, plan, pray, communicate, meditate and interview. Your office is a place that will reflect your personality as well as your position. So let’s talk a little about this physical environment of your work.

I. WHAT MAKES “YOUR OFFICE” A PLACE WHERE YOU WANT TO BE?

Think about offices you have been in. What made it feel good there, or what made it feel bad? We’ll look at several points that should help you have the kind of office that you actually enjoy working in.

A. Organization

1. Furniture and furnishings

It is obvious that you are going to have at least a desk and a chair, and maybe you don’t have the funds to get exactly what you want, but try to choose lighter colors of wood and paint. If you are using old donated stuff, what can you do to make it look better? A little paint can go a long way to improvement. It brings a brighter atmosphere. How much room do you have? Where can you put bookshelves so that books can be organized? Is there a place for an extra table to work on? Get your wife involved with choosing or helping to put finishing touches in your office. A woman has a way of bringing warmth in with personal touches: maybe a picture on the wall or light curtains on the windows. Let her help you decide how furniture should be placed, or what extra things may be needed to make it both functional and comfortable. Once you have the physical basics it is time to think about the team.



2. Office team

One of the best ways to have a positive atmosphere is to begin the day with devotions together. Maybe not all of your team is full-time, but the days they do come in, make sure that you have this spiritual time together just for ten minutes. It sets the whole tone as you work with individuals, and it bonds your team together. Right after that you can have a time when people can ask off the cuff questions—whether those are personal, spiritual, or work related. Your ministry is spiritual, so make sure you give God this priority.

3. Time

Then take time to consider how you will use your time in the office. You need to decide what you want to accomplish in the office and how to schedule that the best. What time of day do you usually need to talk to people or counsel with them? Do they usually come in the morning before they go on with their own activities? When is your best time to make phone calls? If you have a part-time secretary, when will she come into the office? Mornings, afternoons, three days a week, every day?

Always plan in time to be alone at the office so that you can study and make plans for the future. You may even want to have a personal prayer time at the office for the ministry, for your team, for the trainers, for the churches involved.

After you have thought through all of these issues, write out your weekly office schedule and post it so that everyone who comes to the office knows. Especially your secretary needs to know when you are not available to talk to people so that she can suggest another time for them.

B. Purpose

Why do you actually need or have an office? Some people think that they will be more important if they actually have their own office. Let's consider the real purpose, as well as how you can have an atmosphere of purpose.

1. *It fulfills your calling*

You are called to this work. When people walk into your office they should see that you are a man called by God to fulfill this task. Everything around you expresses this, the tidy desk, the calendar with the year's schedule, the files on coaches and groups. Everything is there to help you be the man of God you are called to be.

2. *It fulfills your vision*

You have before you the vision of raising up leaders for the church. How do people sense that vision when they are in your office? Is there a map on the wall showing the area you are responsible for, where groups are being led, where you plan to expand?

3. *It serves*

Your office needs to be functional, not ornamental. You don't need a fancy table that collapses when somebody puts a heavy box on it. Everything in your office should serve a purpose. You don't need 15 chairs if you only have 3 guests, an administrator, and a secretary. But you should make sure you have enough chairs for everyone plus a couple for guests, and these chairs should be stable and comfortable, not falling apart.

Think through everything that is there. Is there dust on that old printer sitting in the corner because you have a new one that works twice as good so nobody touches the old one? Give it away or throw it out. Everything in your office should be set up to serve a purpose. Do you only have one stapler and everyone is always looking for it because everyone needs it? Buy another one. Create an atmosphere of purposeful efficiency.



C. Accomplishment

1. *Persistently pursue visible goals*

These goals will fall into several areas. You have goals for your personal life, family goals, and goals for the church. Write out measurable goals in all of these areas. Examine them regularly to evaluate whether they are being met, whether they are realistic, whether new goals need to be set.

2. *Plans and priorities*

When you know exactly what your goals are then you are able to plan out each day. At the end of every day you should know exactly what your plans are for tomorrow, what your priorities are for that day. And everyone who is involved in those plans should be informed about them. Are you leading a group? Have you confirmed the time and meeting place? Does the secretary know that you need photocopies done tomorrow? Follow through on your plans.



3. *Positive action*

Move forward in a positive direction all the time. What happens when you have a problem? Do you sit there and say, "Oh no, he did it again. He ruined everything." And when the secretary comes in you say, "He did it again. He can't do anything right." And when a deacon stops in, you say, "I don't know what I'm going to do. He messed up again." All of this is negative. It pulls down your spirit and the spirit of everyone else, even people who aren't involved in it.

Instead, take positive action. **Pray about it.** Ask God what you can do to help that brother. Think about how God takes evil and makes good out of it. **Rejoice in the trial!** Trust God for victory. And don't lay

burdens on everyone around you. Look at problems as challenges and get people excited about having problems.

4. **Success**

As you follow these principles, you will have success. Every single success that comes, even if it is very small, give praise to God for it. Turn every success away from yourself into **glory for God**. "See how God blessed our efforts." "Praise God, we doubled this year because He helped us." As you glorify God He will bring more and more success your way. This whole atmosphere of success will permeate your office and lift your spirit every time you walk in.

II. WHAT MAKES IT A PLACE WHERE OTHERS WANT TO COME?

Now that you have created a place that you want to work in, what makes it a place where others want to come to?

A. Your position

Your attitude about your position will have a great influence on the atmosphere in your office.

1. **Recognize the position God put you in**

We have been talking as though you are the director, but maybe you are the administrator or an organizer and only have one room or a desk in this office. This is the position of service that God has given to you

2. **Be grateful for it**

Rejoice in the place God has given you, in the health and strength He has given to you to do this. For the wisdom He so freely gives us when we ask Him for help in what He has called us to do.

3. **Respect the position God has given to you**

Have a proper respect for your position. Don't run it down. "Oh, I'm just the administrator." "I'm just a part-time treasurer." If God has placed this in your hands, respect it and make it into a position that honors God. Don't let your position become known by your character defects of laziness or bossiness, or other negative qualities. Strive to live up to your position in a way you know would please God.

B. Your secretary

We have covered these points about a secretary in a full lecture, but I would like to repeat a few of these things because they are so important to the atmosphere in your office.

1. **Choosing your secretary**

Make sure you choose a secretary carefully. She will probably spend more time in the office than anyone else, and therefore she will be a major factor in what the atmosphere is like. Here are some points to consider:

- observe how faithful she is in church
- her neatness
- be sure your wife approves of her
- be sure your wife can always get in
- have open communication at any time

2. **Train your secretary**

Once you have a secretary, train her to work in a way that will be valuable to both of you

- Be gracious about mistakes. Give her opportunity to learn. Don't scold and fuss about everything. Tell her that you know she will do better next time.



- Give value to mundane tasks. Your secretary will do many mundane tasks that are time consuming and will free you and other team members to carry on other work. Include her in success. Tell her it is because she has been faithful in the little ordinary things that 5 people got saved in unbelievers' groups this month.
- We pass on work that we dislike. Try to be careful that you don't just dump on her, especially if she is already loaded with a lot of work. Show that you are willing to do distasteful tasks too. Always keep a servant's heart.
- Keep busy yourself when you make her work. The atmosphere in your office will become one of resentment if you are sitting there drinking tea and gossiping on the phone while she is trying to get letters typed and records taken care of.
- She is freeing your time, so don't waste it. If your attitude is that now you don't have to work as hard because you have a secretary, God will not honor that. Examine what you are doing with the time that is now freed because she is there.

3. *Treat your secretary respectfully*

Nothing will improve the atmosphere in your office as much as treating others with respect.

- Give your secretary opportunity for spiritual growth, to attend workshops, etc. Look at her as a person that you are spiritually responsible for—**not** like a husband--but as an employer who cares about her well-being.
- Give her some money to decorate her area of work. Let her personalize it so that she feels happy and comfortable to come to work. Let her express her identity as an individual who has importance.
- Be careful not to pry into personal affairs. Do not ever get into a situation of becoming a personal counselor for your secretary. Keep your distance of her personal life. If you sense that she has personal problems, recommend that she talk to your wife or another Godly woman in the church.

C. Your reputation (your good name)

The third area that will make a big difference in the atmosphere of your office is your reputation and character. Here are some things to keep in mind.

1. *Your hospitality*

People should sense a warmth about you. There should be a meekness of spirit, not a wishy-washy attitude of letting everyone run over you, but taking the initiative to serve.

Ask God to protect you from a proud spirit. Often this is evidenced by giving unasked for advice. This will repel people. Treat them with warmth and be available to listen, but be wise in how and when you give advice.

2. *Flexible*

Are you willing to bend when the schedule isn't working out? Yes, you have a plan to study every morning from 9 till 10, but a pastor has come in from another town to talk to you about a personal problem. What do you do? Always be willing to bend to serve others.

3. *Compassionate*

Show compassion when people come with their problems. Don't overreact and judge what they have done. Try to put yourself in their shoes. When quick words of reproof come to mind, let them cool inside of you and turn your thoughts to how Christ would handle this. Let your actions show everyone that you are gentle and forgiving.

4. *Sensitive*

Work on developing sensitivity to people. Develop that inward beauty that makes other people want to be around you. Let yourself be easily moved by the distress of others. Have a tender spirit. At the same time be friendly and enthusiastic. Take time to study people and see what they need.

5. *Fair*

Always be known for your fairness. When someone confronts you with an issue where they think you were not fair, examine your actions. Make corrections. Ask forgiveness. Keep a clear conscience.

CONCLUSION:

We asked before, what makes an office feel good when you go to it? What makes it feel bad? Probably there were a lot of things you weren't aware of. You just knew you did or didn't like it. Now your challenge is to make your office a place that people are always glad to come to, where they feel welcome, cared for. Where they sense purpose and organization and accomplishment. Where people are respected and valued as individuals, not just cogs in the machinery. Begin to examine your own life. What changes do you need to make in your life to improve the atmosphere of the office. Pray and ask God to show what you need to work on.

In all things be above reproach. Maintain unity. Contentment with Godliness is **great gain**. Let us show it in our offices. And I look forward to visiting you in your office someday. Agreed? Amen.

Blessings to you, our dear friends!

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Practical assignment

Completed

- In the space below write down five things that you are going to do to improve your office atmosphere. Write your progress beside each one. Be prepared to share at the next meeting.

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