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How to make an office supply inventory list

A successful business relies on efficient office management. Making and maintaining an office supply list is one way to keep your office running at peak performance. An office supply list is an inventory of the supplies your office needs to perform its daily functions. Utilizing an office supply list ensures that you will not forget important items when ordering supplies. Create an inventory of all office equipment utilized by your company's staff. To compile a comprehensive list, conduct a walk through of your office building. Starting in your office, take note of the office equipment you use. Travel throughout your office building including copy rooms, mail rooms, reception areas, break rooms and restrooms. Place each piece of office equipment in a specific category. This will eliminate duplication. Categories to include are general office supplies, technology and electrical equipment, stationary and paper products, cleaning supplies and miscellaneous. Evaluate the operational requirements for each piece of equipment. For example, printers need ink. Computers need cords. File cabinets need files. Coffee pots need liners. Soap dispensers need soap. Enter the data you collect into a spreadsheet. Use separate columns for the main categories, list of office equipment and actual office supplies. By using a spreadsheet, you can sort your office supply list as needed or add additional information, such as part or product identification numbers. Tips If your company is large, you may want to request from each department those department-specific supplies, such as check registers and employee personnel files. To identify your office supply needs with ease, maintain a current inventory of office equipment and office supplies using your spreadsheet. Refer to your inventory on a regular basis to prevent running out of supplies. If you are a business owner, it's important to keep an up-to-date list of your inventory. Inventory items are considered business assets, and should be listed as such in your financial records. You also need this information to accurately compute how much insurance you need in case of a theft, fire, flood, or other incident that could affect your inventory. If an incident does occur, your inventory list will help you when you file an insurance claim. Decide what type of computer software you want to use to record and update your inventory. Many companies use an Excel spreadsheet to list their inventory items. Enter information such as a description of each item; quantities of items; serial numbers on equipment; the name of the manufacturer; purchase price; and date of purchase. Every type of business will have different things to include. A law office might only have office equipment; a construction company could have bull dozers, trucks, trailers and tools; a grocery store could have cash registers, shelving, refrigerators, freezers and the food products they sell. A large store or company may need to inventory items on a daily basis; a small office might only need to inventory equipment once a year. Not everything needs to be inventoried. Office supplies such as paper, pens, and paper clips don't need to be inventoried (unless you have an office supply store). As a general rule, you should inventory anything that you would include on an insurance report. Include scanned copies of receipts from your original purchase in your computer records. Include scanned or digital copies of photographs of your inventory in your computer records. For example, take photos of computers, copiers, cars, trucks, jewelry (if you own a jewelry store), machinery, etc. Save your computer records in a secure location where a password would be required to access. Only provide the password to those you trust with this information. Make sure you have a number of copies of your inventory kept offsite in a secure location. Provide an electronic copy of your inventory to your lawyer, accountant, and insurance agent. Consider getting a safe deposit box at your bank where you can keep printed and electronic copies of your inventory. Maintaining an acceptable office-supply inventory for your business is a demanding and precise task. When you learn how to order office supplies, you begin to appreciate how diverse your company's needs are. To become proficient in keeping your office supply inventory up-to-date, you must be organized and find time to do an inventory every day. It's in your best interest to recruit someone to help you buy office supplies if you have an office population of 50 people or more. Organize your office supplies on shelves in the office storage area. In order to keep a working inventory of office supplies, there can only be one central storage and distribution center for your supplies. Use labels and a pen to mark areas on the shelves where items are to be stored. Create a list of the supplies you currently have by jotting down a physical inventory. Transfer your list to a computer spreadsheet that you can refer to on a regular basis. The supplies you start with will be the ordering levels you'll use. By analyzing your office supplies usage from month to month, you'll be able to adjust your inventory levels to points that will keep enough supplies on hand at all times. Order your office supplies online through a reputable vendor. Alternatively, create a purchase order each time you order over the phone that will allow you to track your buying history. Be sure to check your order against your original purchase order to make sure you received all of the products. Do a physical inventory each week and keep track of the fluctuation in your office supply inventory. If you notice that your legal pad levels are dropping below the monthly inventory amount, then raise your inventory number accordingly and use that new inventory number when you re-order. Do this for every item on your office supply shelf. Develop a policy where all office special orders must come through you. If you notice a pattern of need for a particular special order item, then add that item to your regular inventory. Tips Discuss re-ordering options with your office-supplies sales representative to determine whether waiting and buying in bulk will save you money. Depending on your consumption rate, you may save money by doing your re-ordering once a quarter as opposed to once a month. You can try to institute a policy where you are to hand out all office supplies and try to use that activity to do your inventory, but you should still do a physical inventory at least once a month. Managers and executives may decide to start taking their own office supplies or other employees may have access to the storage room and your re-ordering system will get thrown off. Creating an inventory list of the items in an office can be important in the event of theft, fire or natural disaster. Without a list, you would have to rely on your memory to account for an office's contents. A copy of the list should be stored off-site and updated as office furniture and equipment is purchased or removed. Optionally, you can supplement an inventory list with drawings or photographs showing the location of key objects in each room. A list of office furniture and room accessories includes desks, chairs, lamps, trash cans, file cabinets and even window treatments. Decorative items should not be overlooked, such as pictures or paintings, wall hanging pieces, plants, ornamental figurines and mirrors. Check shelves that make up an office library. Some reference books can be relatively expensive and their value should be noted. The heart of most offices today is one or more computer systems. Systems are composed of the main computer case (CPU), monitors, printers, scanners, speakers, keyboards, mice and all associated connecting cables. Record any laptop computers. Additional items include uninterruptable battery backup supplies and video-projection systems. An office inventory that also lists the purchase price and purchase date of each item, whether furniture or computers, enables the list to be used in determining the amount of coverage needed to insure the office's contents. Recording the purchase price and date is also useful when filling out income tax returns, as computers and other office equipment can be depreciated over several years, and their purchase price and date is needed in this computation. Include computer software on the list, too. Offices commonly use electronic equipment for communications, in addition to email via a computer. The office inventory list should include copy and fax machines, telephones, dictation machines and intercoms. Broadband modems and routers are used to connect computers and VoIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) to communication services. Having a list that includes serial numbers of all electronic and computing devices will be valuable in the event of theft. Office "supplies" are considered to be items that are used up in the course of business and must be periodically replenished. In this category are paper for copy machines and printers, notebooks and notebook paper, lined pads, date books and calendars, ink and toner for printers and fax machines, pens and pencils, markers, paper clips, trash bags, envelopes and the like. A walk through an office supply store or a quick look at your supply closet will remind you of any additional supply-type items. Software programs are available to assist in managing and tracking office inventory and can give alerts when supplies are running low and need to be reordered. If you're in the process of setting up an office for the first time, you'll no doubt need a number of office supplies. Basically, you'll need to break down your needs into three categories: desk supplies, computer supplies and paper supplies. the new stapler image by Rich Johnson from Fotolia.com Desk supplies are necessary for functioning on a daily basis in an office. Include such items in this grouping as pens, pencils, markers, scissors, highlighters, tape, glue, small paper clips, large paper clips, binder clips, a stapler, a staple remover, staples, correction fluid, phone message pads, Post-its, a stamp, a stamp pad, ink for the stamp pad, a hole punch, a couple of binders and rubber bands. cd container image by bluefern from Fotolia.com You're not likely to function too well without a computer or the related supplies. Include items in this group such as toner and ink cartridges, disk cleaner and repair kit, CD-ROMs, Zip disks, air canister for cleaning and CD storage. file image by Byron Moore from Fotolia.com Also important for any new start-up are paper supplies. Include such supplies as legal pads, copy paper, spiral notebooks, stationery, thank-you cards, adding machine paper, graph paper, business-size envelopes, large manila envelopes, padded envelopes, shipping labels, bubble wrap, special envelopes for disks or catalogs, packing tape, shipping supplies for UPS or FedEx, manila file folders, hanging folders, adhesive labels, color-coded index tabs and business cards.

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