



# MODULE THREE

*workbook*

**Office Design for Maximum Efficiency**

# THE PHYSICAL OFFICE



This module is all about where we work.

Instagram would have you believe all you need is a table, a laptop, a pot plant and a coffee cup to run a business.

Worse still are the ag stock photos that show someone balancing a laptop on one hand while doing crop inspections or sitting on the back of the ute. I think we would all agree that you probably need a bit more than either of these scenarios would have you think.

We get down to the basics of where to put your office and how to lay it out.

Acknowledging that for-now is not for-ever can be helpful in overcoming mental blocks to changes. In the future there may be a different house, a grand designs style renovation, more or less kids at home or more need for formal entertaining spaces.

I would encourage you to live in the now and assess what can be done to improve the current situation, keeping in mind that most decisions can be reversed.



# THE PHYSICAL SPACE

YOUR OFFICE - YOUR WAY

*Perhaps you don't have a dedicated office space? I think you probably need one! Acknowledge you are running a farming business that is quite possibly managing millions of dollars of assets, or might be aspiring to do so.*

*Dedicated spaces help us be in the moment and assist us in keeping things under control, which enhances performance. They also help with boundaries around work and home life, which is really important in farming businesses.*

## **How to create an office when you don't have one**

If you don't have an office start to think about what your options may be. You may have the ability to reallocate space from existing rooms, use a room for a dual purpose or build a room. Options could include the following:

- **Reallocation of space** - Kids can share rooms, it's actually good for them. Adult children do not need a room preserved as a shrine to their childhood more than you need an office.
- An unused formal entry way in some houses can also make a great office. Replace the front door with a clear glass door for light and put cupboards galley style down one wall. Consider wifi range extenders if this is an issue.
- Reassess the need for formal dining rooms or guest bedrooms.
- **Use a room in two ways** – Guest bedrooms and formal lounge and dining rooms can serve a dual function. You will need a cupboard to store folders and in-trays or place a laptop. A bookcase is great if you are not bothered by these items being on view for visitors. A single door cupboard left open against a wall most of the time can be a good balance between things being accessible and private. For storage in a home with older decor, you could use a vintage wardrobe lined with shelves. In a more modern home whiteboard flatpack cupboard works well.
- You also need a desk or table. Use what you have or just buy a folding plastic picnic table. If you are using the kitchen, you might find putting your folders and paperwork trays in the pantry is the way to go. If not, a white cupboard is probably likely to blend in quite well in a kitchen space. Drill a few holes in the back for cabling and your printer can live on the middle shelf.



# THE PHYSICAL SPACE

YOUR OFFICE - YOUR WAY

## **In the house or out of the house?**

Most family farming businesses have offices situated within the home. This can be good and bad. On the good side it is great to be able to work when babies sleep, supervise kids, or to sneak in work when the time is right and not have to travel.

From an infrastructure perspective it makes sense to limit the overall cost of the office by using existing space and to be close to other facilities in the home like kitchens and bathrooms.

If the business grows in size and in office work, the time may come when it is worth considering having an office outside of the family home. This could be semi detached or close to the main house, at the sheds or elsewhere. The benefits of this are the separation between "work" and "home", the lack of distraction from other tasks and the commute. Be it six minutes or six steps the travel to and from work provides an end of work ritual that makes us feel like we have knocked off for the day.

The other benefits of an out of home office is privacy. For businesses predominantly run by a couple this may not be an issue. For larger family operations or businesses who employ staff, it is good to have the farm office located in an area that does not feel like a personal family space. In addition to family privacy, it allows good access to shared physical records. In the absence of the main office manager, others can easily step into the role temporarily and it can help with succession transition.

## **How do we create an out of home office?**

You could go old school and enclose a bit of the veranda! Louvre windows are optional. Another alternative is building an office in the corner of a shed. Lined and insulated with a second hand air conditioner and a second hand window it can be a comfortable workspace.

## **Think big**

An office can be easily and logically combined with staff amenities. A office co-located with kitchenette and toilets can be used by shearing staff, traveling truck drivers and seasonal casuals. Transportable or relocatable buildings can offer good options in this regard and some prefabricated sheds can include office and amenities as a part of the overall design.



# MY IDEAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT

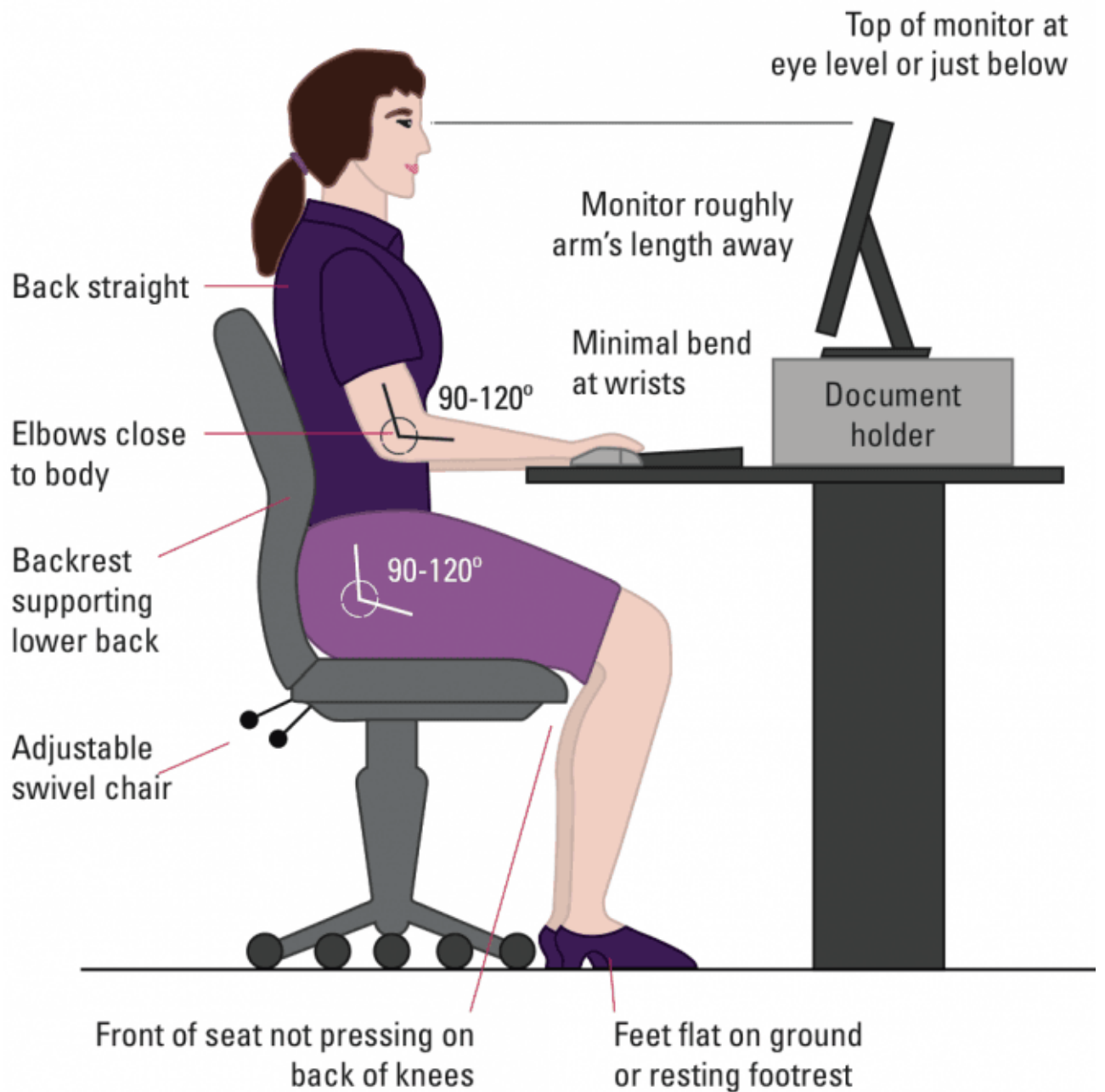
**QUESTION #1:** Write down 5 - 10 words to describe your ideal working environment

**QUESTION #2:** Note the time of day and days of the week (or weather) you generally work in. Short blocks or long blocks of time.

**QUESTION #3:** Note down any limitations or opportunities



# OFFICE ERGONOMICS





# IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL SPACE

## FOCUS AREA #1

ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED

SOLUTION

BENEFITS

COST AND TIME COMMITMENT

## FOCUS AREA #2

ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED

SOLUTION

BENEFITS

COST AND TIME COMMITMENT

