

# The Trusty Notebook Gets a Modern (and Productive) Twist

A new breed of planners breaks pages into distinct zones to keep notes organized.

Before a meeting, important focus topics can be written in prep areas.

Notation areas are ideal for jotting down meeting notes, ideas and even sketches.

A dot grid pattern provides a customizable, versatile structure without the distraction of solid lines.

A list of action items forms a handy to-do list to tackle post-meeting.

**A**nn Noder is no stranger to digital tools. As CEO of Pitch Public Relations, she spends hours each day texting, emailing and collaborating with colleagues using messaging software, but she also has a large notepad to jot down notes, and a paper desk calendar she refers to daily.

"Having these items staring me in the face helps keep me organized and focused during the day, rather than having to log in or access a particular digital program," Noder says. "There is something about the tangible aspect of paper and having it easily accessible for a quick glance that works for me."

While it's impossible to do business in 2019 without a smartphone and a computer, some business leaders swear by their paper planners and notebooks.

## New devotees

As executives like Noder continue to use traditional paper tools, a new crop of notebooks and planners on the market have been created specifically to enhance the productivity of users in a manner flexible enough to operate in any industry or setting. Newer brands like Field Notes and the Hobonichi Techo planner have joined classics like Moleskine in building cult followings. Others, such as the Bullet Journal, are more about the method of note-taking than the notebook itself. Some fans of the BUJO method, as it's

known, create journal and calendar pages so aesthetically pleasing that they've posted millions of photos of them to social media. But Bullet Journal founder Ryder Carroll says the pages need not be intricately designed.

"For some, the illustration and adornment is an intentional choice, and it's an outlet for creative people who may not have creative outlets or jobs," he says. "But none of that is required. It's about figuring out what you need and how the Bullet Journal can best serve you. It's a mindfulness practice disguised as a productivity system."

## Staying focused

Regardless of which method they choose, productivity experts says that using paper allows users to arrange their thoughts in a tangible way. Likewise, research suggests that writing by hand aids in retaining information. You can't write as fast as you can type, after all, which means that note-taking demands a higher degree of processing and learning.

"When we're walking around with partial lists in our heads, we feel very stressed, and we may not even know why," says psychotherapist and executive coach

Maud Purcell. "But when we're putting our to-dos in a journal, we feel better because we know that we have everything that needs to be done in one location."

## Less screen time

Paper planners and journals also allow users to give their eyes and brain a respite from screen time; a Nielsen report last year found that Americans now spend an average of more than 11 hours per day interacting with media. Plus, keeping the phone in your pocket reduces the temptation to open apps for a quick check that might turn into an hour of scrolling through social media or answering emails, says productivity expert Laura Vanderkam, author of *Off the Clock: Feel Less Busy While Getting More Done*. "The cause of time management is not advanced by spending more time on our phones," she says.

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