



SENIC Battlecards

Buying Office Supplies

Wondering how to buy office supplies? It's not as easy as you might think, and when things go wrong, there's plenty of blame to go around.

Buying office supplies can be a "no-win" situation. Your co-workers are more than eager to share their opinions about what the office needs (usually top of the line stuff), while the boss is more concerned about the price than the name on the label. Somehow, the responsibility for stocking the shelves has landed on your desk, so what now? To begin with, don't panic. You just need to set some ground rules, not only for your co-workers, but for yourself as well. Before long, your ground rules will turn into a procedure that everyone can live with - including you.

Cost. If buying the company's office supplies is a new role for you, your first question should be, "How much can I spend?", and there's only one person who can give you the right answer to that question - your boss. In most cases, you should be able to get both a monthly and annual budget amount for supplies. You might also want to use the opportunity to ask your boss about any other expectations he has regarding your new role.

Usability. Now that the boss is taken care of, your next step is to make a list of the supplies that are currently being used in the office and assess whether they adequately meet the company's needs. The best sources of information about the usability of your current supplies are the people who use them on a daily basis - your coworkers. Listen to everyone's

input, but don't act on their recommendations until you are sure they fit within your budgetary constraints.

Vendors. By this time, you'll have a pretty good idea about the supplies you need to purchase and you're ready to begin. There's a good chance that your predecessor has established relationships with vendors for certain products. Start with these, but don't assume that they are the best deal. Instead, shop around a bit for cost savings through other vendors. If you're not doing it already, you might also want to consider how much you could save by purchasing supplies in bulk.

Stocking. Empty shelves are your worst enemy. All of your hard work will go out the window if your coworkers don't have the supplies they need when they need them. Make it a habit to regularly visit the supply closet and reorder supplies long before they run out.

Monitoring. If you really want to impress your boss, also make it a habit to monitor your company's supply usage - especially big ticket items. You can expect the usage of most supplies to remain fairly consistent. Sometimes, you may see a sharp spike in usage when the company is working on a big project. However, if supplies are flying out the door and you're not working on a big project, you'll need to start asking some questions. There may be a perfectly legitimate reason for it. On the other hand, someone might be stocking their own shelves with company property. Either way, you need to understand what's going on so that you can intelligently report problems to your supervisor.



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