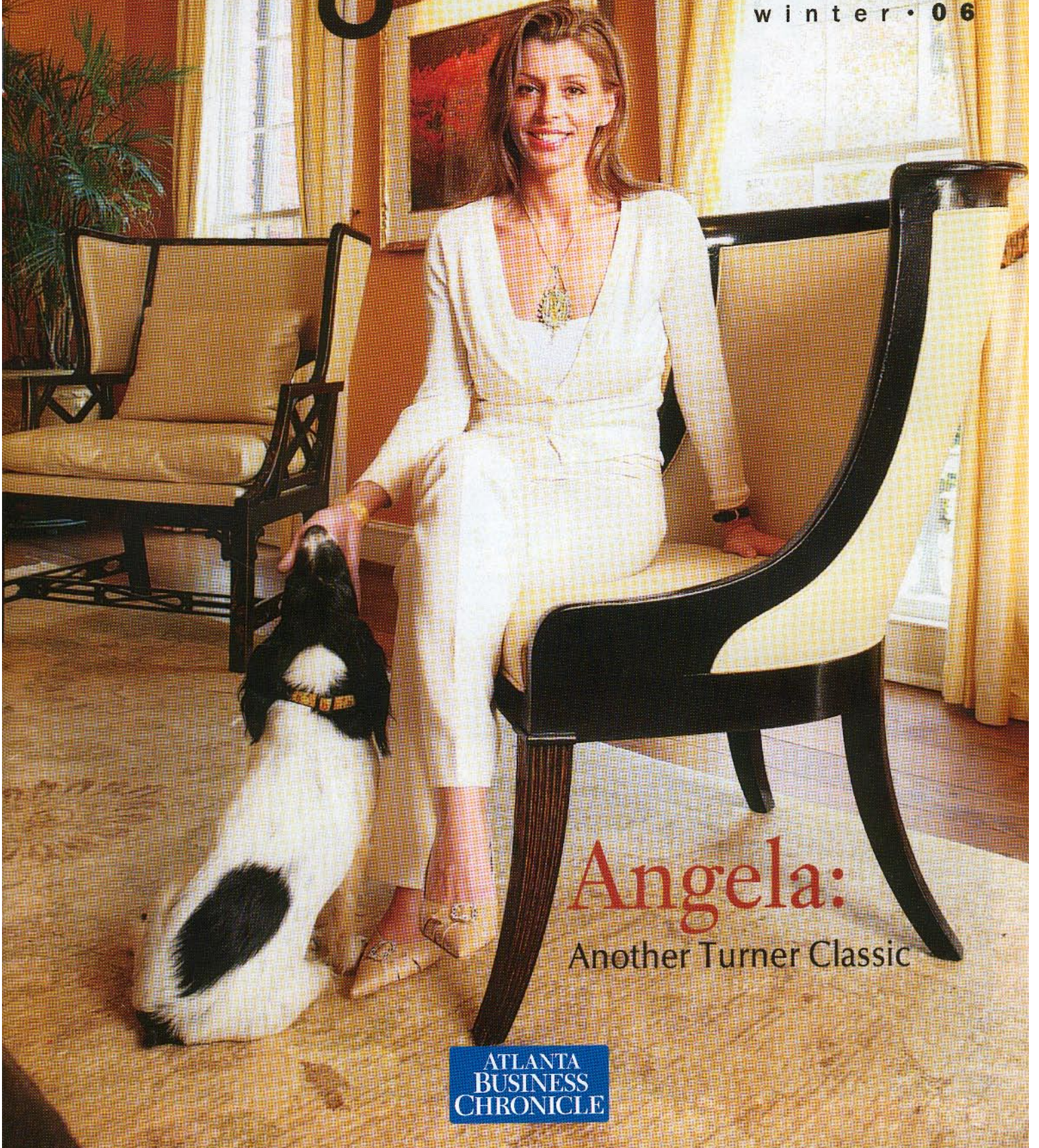


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Design the perfect home office

By Mary Abreu

Technological advances have made it possible for business to be done nearly anywhere, at any time, and what better place to catch up on e-mails or read monthly sales reports than from the comfort of your own home office?

Valerie Weitzner (pictured at right) created a home office in what was formerly a wet bar adjacent to the master bedroom in her Atlanta home. "I need a place that's private where I can keep all my paperwork and have some time to myself to work on the computer and do other types of work," said Weitzner, who does volunteer work for her children's school and the Alliance Theatre.

Weitzner also has found her home office to be indispensable as she launches her business, Buckhead Candy Co. In addition to the necessities — a desk, computer, printer and telephone — her home office includes a fabric wall that doubles as a bulletin board, allowing her to keep pictures, papers and important documents close at hand without cluttering her desktop.

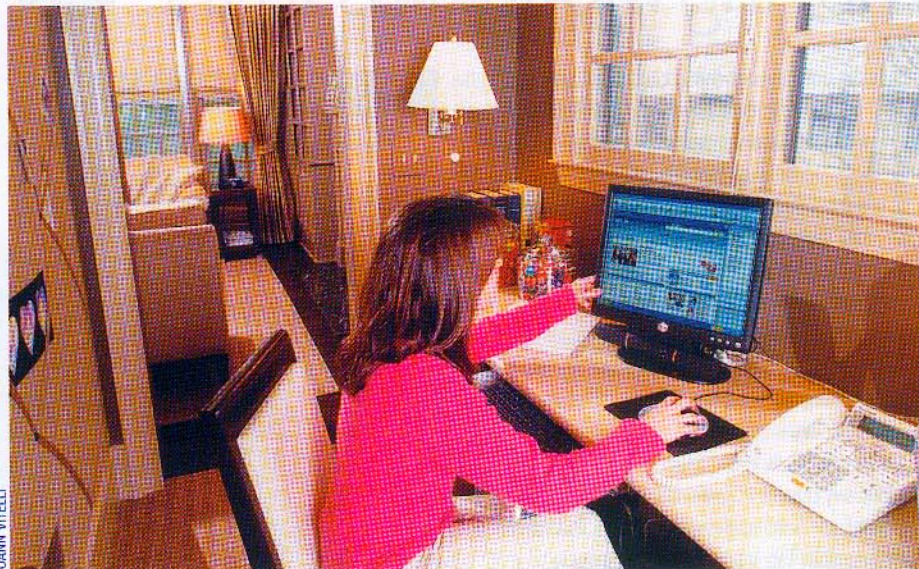
"It's a very small space but so functional," she said. "I probably spend 50 percent of my free time there."

To best organize a home office, first determine what it will be used for, said John Rasper, CEO of DeKalb Office Environments. "Furniture is the support tool for all the things you need to do your job," he said. Fax machines, computers and other hardware are all considerations when planning the space, along with "anything else that helps you do business faster and more efficiently."

Interior designer Corey McIntosh of McIntosh Interiors not only creates home offices for his clients, but he works from an office in his home as well. That experience gives him a practical perspective on the functionality of the space.

"Thinking, planning ahead about placement of large items is critical (i.e.: printer, fax machine, scanner, etc.)," McIntosh said. "You want them to be easily accessible, yet out of the way ... not taking up valuable desk space. A great solution, whenever possible, is to have them placed on pullout surfaces, drawers."

McIntosh said his home office needed to include plenty of storage space, some-



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thing that's often overlooked when people plan their offices.

"I think storage is always a plus," he said. "Lots of drawers and places to stash things away — we all work better if we have clear surfaces."

Rasper emphasized the need for efficiency as it relates to creating a home office.

"People who work out of their home want to maximize their time," he said.

Details can make a big difference in a home office. McIntosh said grommets — holes drilled in the desktop — are key to cord management. It's also important to assess whether enough outlets for plugs are in the room.

"If you are doing a renovation or new construction, it's important to get several plugs. You can never have too many," McIntosh said. "In addition to plugs down low, it's nice to have some higher at 42 inches, as if above a kitchen counter."

Ergonomics are just as vital to a home office as they are to the workplace. Plan for at least 36 inches beneath a seated work area for knee space, McIntosh said. Keyboard drawers not only provide a cleaner look, but also allow for better alignment of the body in relation to a computer keyboard.

"You need a chair with a lot of ergonomics so you don't get fatigued," Rasper said. "There are all sorts of products that help you conduct business at the computer that put things at eyesight level."

For McIntosh, what's equally important

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING A HOME OFFICE

- ▶ What type of work will be accomplished in your home office?
- ▶ What hardware — computers, fax machines, telephones, etc. — will facilitate your work?
- ▶ Are there enough power outlets for all of the required equipment?
- ▶ Are telephone and Internet connections available?
- ▶ How much filing and storage space do you need?
- ▶ Is there much natural light in the room? If not, should task lighting be added?

as what's in the home office is where the work space is situated within the home.

"Speaking for myself, personally, I don't like a home office anywhere near the bedroom," he said. "When you go to the bed, it should be for rest. I don't want to be staring at a computer thinking about work when I'm in bed or in close proximity to my bedroom."

If the office tends toward the messy, McIntosh recommends finding a spot away from the main living areas, such as near a garage, or doors that can close it off from the rest of house.

"If you have children, it's nice if it's sort of removed from the children's area so you can focus," he said. **LIA**