

BY ANNE RICHTER ARNOLD

PHOTOS COURTESY OF GILBERTE INTERIORS

# ACCOMMODATING THE NEW NORMAL

GILBERTE INTERIORS CREATES HOME  
OFFICES AND STUDY SPACES

Loungewear instead of business attire, Zoom calls instead of in-person meetings, and wherever one can find space for a laptop instead of commuting to an office; for many, this has become the weekday routine. Working from home changed the lifestyles of a significant number of people throughout the country in 2020, and with it, the needs of homeowners.





**Above:** Creating a peaceful space in this busy household allows for productive work. Printers, a charging station, and everything needed in an office allows for a seamless transition to work from home.  
**Inset:** Soft-textured fabrics and an area rug add to the overall calming feel of this room.







Since this trend is not expected to end any-time soon—or ever, for some people—interior designers like Cheryl Boghosian, ASID, of Gilberte Interiors in Hanover, New Hampshire, have the expertise to create or renovate home offices and spaces for learning that are conducive to staying focused and productive. Within the first few months of the pandemic and shutdown last year, Cheryl says the majority of requests were to create spaces for her clients to work from home more comfortably, improve the lighting design of their current workspace, and to better accommodate virtual learning—essentially to create an environment that makes the family feel relaxed, organized, and productive. “Our challenge has been to create well-designed spaces that achieve these goals.”



Creating a work space for all family members has been important. Everyone is more successful when they have a space cleared of clutter, making it easier to focus. Using Corion and other solid-surface materials for desk tops allows for easy cleaning.

“Making sure [home offices] are ergonomically successful and comfortable has also been a priority, and finding the right furnishings is key,” says Cheryl.

### Home Becomes the Office

“In the beginning, we didn’t know how long this would last, but more and more people have made the commitment to create dedicated home office space, even if they think they will eventually be going back to their ‘other’ office,” says Cheryl. “Clients feel that the expense to create usable and comfortable workspaces is justified.”

Spending all day working in one space and communicating via video require proper lighting. Cheryl and her team design lighting to improve both the balance and the quality of light, and often they make simple but important changes. The Gilberte Interiors design team is well-versed in working with existing electrical to find ways to upgrade, and they will get electricians on-site as needed to install fixtures that they can provide.

“Making sure [home offices] are ergonomically successful and comfortable has also been a priority, and finding the right furnishings is key,” says Cheryl. “People are noticing their spaces more closely, so the aesthetics and the need for upgrades have been more obvious. We have always been strong supporters of using materials from nature—wood, natural textile fibers, and stone—that create a calming environment that helps with productivity.”

Work spaces for children incorporate color and easy-care surfaces to create spaces that everyone wants to spend time in. Gilberte's workroom fabricated custom window treatments, floor pillows, and upholstery to make these rooms special.



**Above:** The Gilberte design team plans out the details, which do make the difference!

Integrating clients' technological needs into home-office design has also been a frequent request for Cheryl. From charging stations for phones and computers to remote-controlled and dimmable lighting to adjustable window treatments, her team designs the perfect functional, high-tech environment.

### **A Space for Virtual Learning**

"We have seen a strong focus on creating workspaces for children this last year," says Cheryl. "For some clients, even when their children returned to in-school or hybrid learning, they made space and upgrades. For other clients whose children continue to learn from home, this has been a priority in their project planning."

Cheryl and her team always start each design process by considering functionality: "What is needed and existing conditions—lighting, outlets, workspace—then, the age of the children. Do they need space designed within easy reach of the parents, or can they be learning in their bedrooms or the family room? We often look at closet spaces, as these can be easily adapted to create desk areas by removing the doors and adding a counter, outlets, lighting, and bookshelves," she says. To make children's spaces appealing and exciting, Cheryl often starts by applying a fresh coat of paint, new fabrics, and hanging bulletin boards or children's art projects. Sometimes a low table and floor pillows in a corner with good lighting is just what's needed

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for younger learners to feel motivated and comfortable.

Cheryl remarks, “I try to keep in mind that young children are usually excited about going to school, and we need to create this same feeling with spaces where they feel they are ‘going to school,’ but with all the warmth of being home. Just like with older kids and adults, having a dedicated work area sometimes makes focus and concentration easier.”

### Considering Every Client’s Needs

One thing Cheryl and her team always keep in mind is that each household has different needs, and everyone works differently. “Our design team prides itself on the ability to listen to our clients and their family’s needs, and to access the spaces and find solutions that fit. We know this has been a challenging time for everyone, and it has given us even more incentive to do what we can to make some quick and easy changes to help everyone adjust to this new way of life.”

The designers at Gilberte Interiors are available to meet remotely and in person to help make these workspaces a reality. “We work with a team of both on-premise craftsmen (we have our own upholstery, slipcovering, and fabric workrooms) along with cabinetmakers and an installation team. We know that these spaces need to

be available to the client safely and with minimal disruption, and those are priorities for us,” says Cheryl.

Cheryl sees the home workspace trend continuing. “I think that the driving force for going back to the office will be if the workforce is as efficient and effective working from home all or some of the time.” She believes that having a workspace that supports that will give companies and staff the incentive to continue working from home at least some of the time in the future. “In

talking to a lot of our clients, they never thought they could work as well or enjoy being home as much as they are discovering they are . . . maybe this, in the end, will allow people to have a better balance in their lives.” **rw**

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