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A good idea, no matter how modest, has nobility.

While we generally reserve our technology-age awe for the slick, flashy and high-priced, consider the inventions that rest on the other side of the cutting edge. Unpretentious inspirations that address our smaller ambitions — like cleaning up the mess of wires beneath our computer desks, for example.

The Cable Manager (about \$40) is a response to the piles of wires, cables and power bars that lie underfoot, the ugly by-products of the computer age.

The plastic contraption, which resembles a medieval torture device, features plastic arms and hooks that mount underneath your desk to organize the kilometres of cables currently coiled on your floor in a big, spaghetti-like mound.

My own private mountain of under-desk wires has risen like an anthill over the years.

Every new device that connects to our computers — printers, music players and USB accessories — expands the octopus horror. They gather dust and repel the eye.

While technology designers have devoted considerable effort to making their computer monitors and printers sleek and sexy, they've ignored the aesthetic travesty of wires cascading downward from the rear ends of their gear, collecting in heaps on the floor.

The proposed solutions to this high-tech problem are distinctly low-tech. There are Velcro straps, curly plastic wrapping designed to pull a fistful of cables together and those clips that secure cables to your baseboards with small nails.

In all, hardly inspiring.

The Cable Manager is a newfangled approach. It screws or clamps beneath your desk. A selection of adjustable shelves and cable clips slide along a plastic track allowing you to customize a configuration that receives your wires, power supplies and a couple of small units such as a USB hub, a modem or a router.

Instead of resting on the floor in a muddle, your cables float in mid-air, neatly wrapped up and draping from a hook.

Bungee cables secure power bars or routers in place on mini-shelves.

And you can trace the beginning of each cable to its end using colour-coded stickers.

It's not perfect. I'm still looking at a collection of unattractive wires that are hanging beneath my desk rather than sitting on the floor. It doesn't resemble, for example, the portrait of utopian cable order pictured in the device's promotional material.

This may have something to do with my own inability to wrap wires in perfect linear loops as instructed. Making cable look neat seems to require a professional touch.

But even if I were able to tame my own cable beast, it wouldn't all fit on the Cable Manager. The device is designed to organize up to a dozen cables, secure two or three small devices such as power packs or router hubs and provide hooks for one or two power bars.

Not bad. But I ran out of space with my abnormally vast cable-and-assorted-gadgets problem.

My stringy mess filled up and weighed down the Cable Manager while leaving a couple of power units and a few cables still sitting on the floor.

In short, I'd need two Cable Managers to manage my entire problem. There is a half measure solution. The company sells an expansion kit (\$28) for added brackets, hooks and room.

There's no arguing the cleansing experience that comes with bringing order to your cable chaos.

My vacuum cleaner discovered the floor area beneath my desk for the first time in years. It wasn't pretty. You may be appalled at the ecological disaster taking shape under all of those cables.

In addition to dust bunnies that date back to the early 1990s, I found eight Smarties, the top of an old yogurt container and 28 pieces of stale popcorn.

Beyond mere cleanliness, the Cable Manager also bestows a sense of psychological liberation from the tyranny of disarray.

Clarity of space brings clarity of mind.

It's Zen for your office space.

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