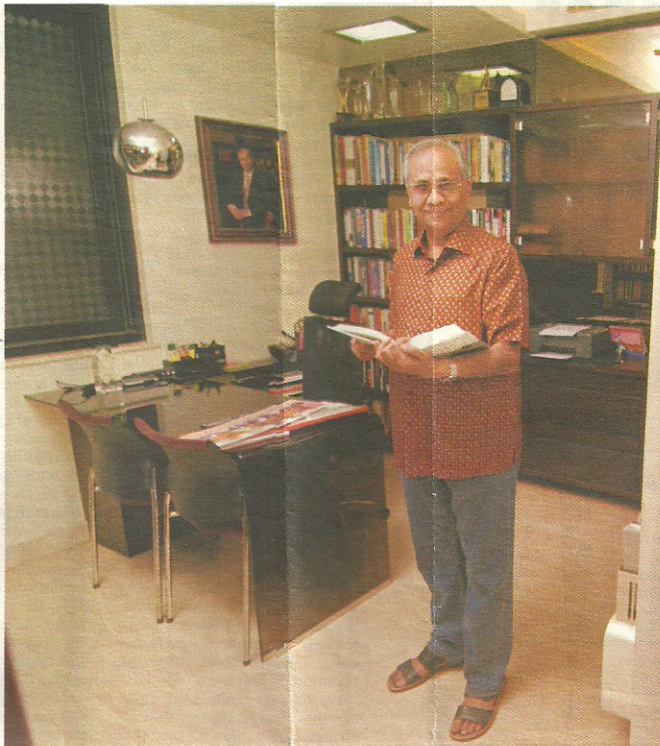
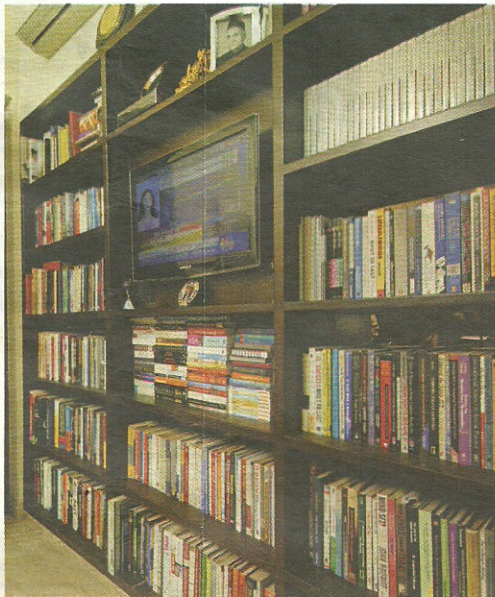


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HEAD OFFICE
APARNA PIRAMAL RAJE

THE BANKER-TURNED-AUTHOR



This former CMD of Bank of Baroda has books stacked from floor to ceiling in his 'home office', in keeping with his post-retirement avatar

Office workers usually daydream about the future as a utopia where they are unshackled from their workstations. Anil Khandelwal, a former chairman and managing director of Bank of Baroda, is precisely the opposite. Retirement can be "professional widowhood, especially in the public sector", Khandelwal professes, joking that "no one calls you any more". From 2005-08, under Khandelwal's leadership, Bank of Baroda doubled its business and its profits, with significantly improved employee productivity, and Khandelwal earned a reputation as a public sector banking turnaround expert. Even before his retirement from one of India's largest public sector banks, Khandelwal had anticipated the potential hazards of post-retirement slowdown. Over the past few years, he has leveraged his experiences to construct a "portfolio" career of diverse activities. This includes writing his autobiography, *Dare to Lead*, which was published in 2011, writing a regular column in a human resources magazine, chairing a national government committee, mentoring younger banking colleagues and advising private sector companies as a consultant or board member (including BP Ergo, the office furniture business of the writer's family). Khandelwal designed a quintessential "official" work envi-

ronmental block in Mumbai's Worli neighbourhood, with the help of his wife Vandna, who offered both creative and practical inputs.

The approximately 8x8ft room is "small, yet functional", he says, and was converted from a staff utility and storage room, situated at the entrance of the flat.

For most people, a home office often serves as a library or study for personal contemplation, reading or writing. Business meetings at home usually take place in a more casual lounge with a sofa and a coffee table. Khandelwal's home office is different—it is clearly modelled as a senior manager's cabin for work-related meetings, as well as a library and study. I am keen to understand his motivations for creating such a business-like workspace in his home.

Professional avatar, private space

This space has all the usual symbols of corporate chiefdom: a high-backed leather chair, a desk, two chairs for visitors, a flat-screen television, computer equipment and several shelves of box files. A line of trophies is perched neatly atop a storage unit. Two wall-mounted photo collages capture Khandelwal's professional accomplishments and family travels, and conceal the electrical fittings behind. A markerboard lists his appointments for the day.

The only indications of the room's non-corporate location are its floor-to-ceiling bookshelves: Khandelwal says he has more than 2,000 books, largely on management literature, which he describes as his "treasure trove". The collection spans business stalwarts such as Jack Welch and Jim Collins, as well as more unusual fare such as *Tempered*

William Isaacs—two of his favourites.

The home office is the venue for his meetings, phone conversations, writing and reading. "The whole idea is that I am in an office, I don't have that psychological drain that I am not working. Maybe it gives me a surrogate sense of remaining a CEO," he admits. He observes 9-to-5 office hours, although he now takes exercise breaks during the day, and has recently learnt to swim.

Lessons for home office design

The design offers lessons to all those who work from home.

First, placement. Most of us camp at the dining table when working from home (Khandelwal says he did so himself while with the bank). This is neither ergonomically advisable, nor particularly convenient for other household members. By assigning a dedicated room at the entrance of the apartment for his personal study-library-office, Khandelwal says he manages to remain "inside-out"—at home but not intruding on his wife's territory; she smiles in agreement. For others, if a separate room is not available, a quiet spot in the master bedroom (which is usually unoccupied during working hours) is preferable to taking over the family living room.

Second, functionality. For those who spend several hours at a stretch working from home, the home office must perform as much as a commercial interior fit-out. Lighting, ventilation, technology, furniture, computer equipment and storage are all important considerations in maximizing efficiency from a compact space.

Third, personalization. Home offices allow for much-desired individual

and form, must hinge on the most important criteria for the occupant. The starting point for Khandelwal's home office was the need to neatly preserve and display his enviable library. His wife mentions that dedicated storage was critical to accommodate sprawling stacks of books. Other design factors could include taking advantage of a great view, preserving a prized antique desk, or fitting in technology.

Finally, it highlights the extent to which our personal and professional notions of identity are intertwined. "If this room was not there, I don't know how miserable my life would have been," Khandelwal confesses.

As his writings show, Khandelwal is certainly a consummate public sector banker. Despite the complex challenges faced by heads of public sector banks, his autobiography describes his tenure as "an exhilarating, life-changing three years", and an "unforgettable" experience.

Given his full-throttle endorsement of public sector life, it is unsurprising that he has established a corporate headquarters for himself in his personal domain. With longer working lives, "portfolio" careers, and increasingly blurred boundaries between business and pleasure, our daily work—and our workplaces—can actually be a source of personal fulfilment—whether we care to admit this or not.

Aparna Piramal Raje, a director of BP Ergo, meets heads of organizations every month to investigate the connections between their workspaces and working styles.

Work out of home: (clockwise from above) The Lifetime Achievement Award that Anil Khandelwal received from The Asian Banker, Singapore, the first Indian to receive it; his library-cum-office has over 2,000 books, mostly management titles; Khandelwal in his home office; and his wife Vandna.

