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Checkout Lane: Getting organized

Photos

By **Julie Onufrak**
The Patriot Ledger

Posted Jan 17, 2009 @ 01:00 AM

BRAINTREE — Maybe you don't know how to begin to clean the clutter that has built up in your home. Maybe you've been fighting with your spouse over the mess. Maybe you can't seem to pay your bills on time. In any case, it may be time to call in a professional organizer.

"It's time to call in an organizer when it's really affecting your life," said Ann Marie Williams, owner of Atmosphere Consulting in Braintree. "It's affecting your job status; I've had clients who called because it was affecting family and marital status."

A good place to look for professional organizers in your area is on the Web

ORGANIZING TIPS

Declutter. Don't limit yourself to the usual garage, basement and attic. Look at the common areas such as drawers and cupboards and places where things tend to go that we think we'll get to later. Divide clutter into boxes marked "keep," "donate," "sell" and "throw out" – even though you don't want it, someone else might.

Cash in and splurge. Most of us have a coin jar, but loose change also ends

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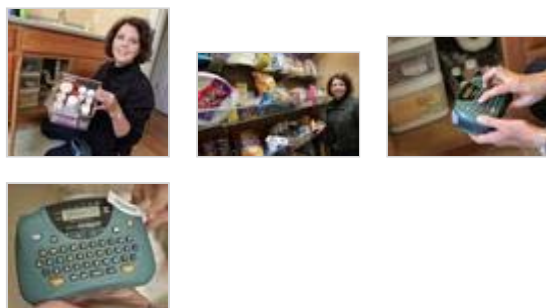


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Ann Marie Williams, owner of Atmosphere Consulting, helps people get organized. Above, she helps a client settle into a new home by sorting items into labeled bins.

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site of the National Association of Professional Organizers' New England chapter, napo-newengland.com.

"Like anything you shop for, you want to look for a company that fits your personality," said Williams.

She recommends checking out Web sites to see if an

organizer's personality and services match clients' needs. Some organizers may specialize in working with people who have Attention Deficit Disorder or who are hoarders; some may provide services like home staging in addition to basic organizing.

Patrice Flynn, owner of House Call in Carver, recommends looking for testimonials from other clients and calling potential organizers for referrals. "Check out if you're compatible with the person," she said. The organizer should be able to understand what a client's goals are and work with them to create a plan of action.

Williams said that average rates in the Boston area begin at around \$50 per hour for residential services and go up to as much as \$200 per hour to help executives organize their offices. She said many organizers are willing to work

up under the sofa cushions, in drawers and in the laundry room. Gather up your change and take it to a Coinstar Center, which quickly and easily turn loose change into cash which can be used to purchase a special treat for yourself.

Sort through old photos and refresh the family room art. The grocery bag of photos you've been meaning to put into albums for 10 years is full and falling apart. Sort out blurry and unrecognizable shots that would never go into an album. Enlarge some and update the photos in the family room.

Clean up your music collection. Anyone with even a modest-size collection has CDs separated from their cases, missing case jackets, scratched discs, damaged tapes and case-less cassettes. Gather it all together in one spot. Separate into stacks and toss damaged ones.

Source: organizetips.com

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The key, she said, is a client's willingness to put in the time.

"Organizing is a process, not an event," Williams said. "You can't just do it in one afternoon. You have to be committed to change."

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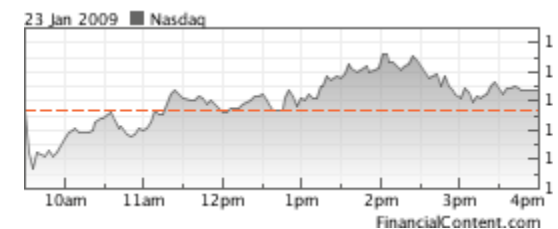
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