

"Home Work Made Easier Organizational Tips From A Pro"

By Susie Hayman of In Your Business

Do you have piles of paper on a desk, table or elsewhere, adding to the visual clutter in your home? Do you ever file something somewhere and then can't remember where you filed it? Do you waste time looking for things? Does the paper in your home manage you rather than you manage it?

Whether you operate a business out of your home or whether your home is your business, you must manage it. Just as it took days, weeks, months or years for the piles to form, it takes time to make them disappear. Getting organized is about taking baby steps, making small changes that allow you to take back control, so that you have more time and money to do the things you want to do.

There are many barriers that impact our ability to get and stay organized; often, these are life-changing or environmental events beyond our control – relocation, a job change, illness, loss of a loved one, or even an occasion for celebration. Asking for help and managing a few simple tasks can get us through these difficult periods. However, too often, we are our own barrier and we sabotage ourselves – making excuses or finding reasons not to be more organized. By changing our mindset and focusing on one pile, one file drawer, one countertop or one over-scheduled day, we can begin to feel a sense of accomplishment, rather than overwhelmed. "Tackle the paper nightmares" in your life by trying just a few of my tips. Enjoy your newly found time and maybe even money.

- **Separate your personal life from your professional life.** A common source of frustration for my clients is the chaos involved with business papers, personal bills, and family/children activities intertwined in one place. If you use the same room for personal and professional business or if you share the room with someone else in your household, designate spaces for each activity, task or person. Create separate filing systems, e-mail addresses and workspaces.
- **Organize your files and important documents (paper and electronic) so that you know where to retrieve them.** My clients repeatedly say, "I'm afraid if I file it, I won't be able to find it." Determine categories and sub-categories for your paper files -- use hanging files for the categories and file folders for sub-categories. Keep

your file tabs justified to the left, right or center; don't stagger them. Alphabetize and color code your paper files and be creative with naming them. Categorize your electronic files in folders and sub-folders -- replace paper files with electronic ones when you can. "Just in case I need it," copies are not always necessary.

- **Keep those files and papers you refer to all the time easily accessible.** Recognizing the visual needs of my clients, I know that "out of sight" can be "out of mind." I suggest desktop file sorters, baskets or a tickler system to organize your paper "to do" and "action" files. Or, eliminate some of those piles by keeping your tasks, action items and "to dos" electronically.
- **Make a master list of your files and important documents.** Clients who are part of the "sandwich generation" particularly need to be on top of what's happening not only in their own lives, but also the lives of children and parents. Share that information with a family member or friend so that if something happens to you, someone can find it.
- **Break down your "To Do" lists by project or task.** Multiple "to do" lists cause unnecessary stress to my clients. Having categorized and organized lists is less overwhelming, more efficient and saves time and money. Consolidate shopping trips by making lists, planning menus and scheduling appointments and errands.
- **Pay your bills online.** A system for paying bills is another tremendous source of frustration for my clients. The paper attached to one bill can be cumbersome and stressful. Sign up for online bill paying with your bank; you can even get e-mail reminders for when the bills are due. And, if you must have that paper trail, you can print a receipt of your transaction.
- **Assign a home for everything.** Clients always ask, "Where should I put it?" It's much easier to put something away when you have a specific place for it; this includes all those "articles, catalogues, and magazines you don't know what to do with or those you may want to look at later." For those things you don't refer to on a regular basis or you haven't referred to in over a year, find a home either in a file cabinet, on a shelf, on a bookcase or in the trashcan.
- **Open your mail over the trash can.**
Sort it, purge it, and if you keep it, put it in its home.

A little organization goes a long way. Just implementing a few new ideas for dealing with some of the paper in your home can save you time and money – the two things that we never seem to have enough of! That should be more than enough to give you a renewed sense of empowerment, a restored sense of control and the energy to continue making progress towards creating an organized lifestyle.

For a little professional help in achieving your organizing goals, you can contact Susie Hayman of **In Your Business** by phone --804.360.8337, e-mail -- info@inyourbizness.com or the web -- www.inyourbizness.com.

Susie has been organizing herself and others for more than 30 years. She has extensive experience in the areas of: business management, education and training, retail, and nonprofit fund raising/public relations. She has developed various organizing strategies and systems which have increased employee productivity and organizational efficiency for small businesses, retailers, nonprofit organizations, and individuals with home offices. Susie is a member of NAPO (National Association of Professional Organizers), NAPO-Richmond, serving as Director of Corporate Partners, NAWBO (National Association of Women Business Owners, RMA (Retail Merchants Association) and N.E.W. (Network of Enterprising Women).

As the owner and founder of **In Your Business**, Susie uses her personal organizing experiences, as well as her professional knowledge and business expertise, to help her clients develop organizing solutions and systems that meet their specific needs. She also conducts organizing classes and workshops for businesses and organizations throughout the Richmond area.