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[The Organized Life](#) **Clear the Clutter - And Your Mind - With a Professional Organizer**

You read Real Simple cover to cover, you watch Mission: Organization on HGTV religiously and the staff at your local Container Store knows you by name. But, your home is still chaos central. Time to call in the professionals - professional organizers, that is. Read on for insight into several local companies that will help you declutter, destress and discover space you never knew you had, both in your home and in your life.

Get Organized! Five Easy Ways to Declutter and Destress

1. Keep only what you use or love. Donate, toss or pack away the rest.
2. Sort through your mail daily. Recycle or shred accordingly.
3. Only check your email at designated times during the day.
4. Put everything back in its place when you're done with it.
5. Properly store photos and important documents so you'll have them forever.

Karli Bertocchi, Organized With Style

Organized thoughts: Bertocchi always found pleasure in organizing things. "I was an organized child," she says. "It never felt like a chore; it always put a huge grin on my face." In her career path, she worked in interior design and as an office manager for a construction company. "Wherever I was, I always wanted to organize," Bertocchi explains. In 2004, she opened Organized With Style, a company that specializes in



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"How do I get organized?"

Gain 3 hours every day, for life - They laughed at me until it

home and office organization based on personal organization styles. "I try to bring out people's true personalities from underneath the clutter," she says.



Click here to view before and after.

A fresh perspective: "I don't just look at the messes," Bertocchi says. "I also look where people are organized in their lives." By focusing on underlying sources of clutter, Bertocchi maintains you can create permanent and lasting change. "Other issues do come up in this process," she says. "You can absolutely achieve bigger goals by taking charge of the clutter." She says it's not about being perfect, but about becoming empowered.

KO the clutter: Every organizer talks about tackling the mountain of paper each of us deals with every day, from mail to important personal papers to work documents. Bertocchi extended her practices to email, as well. "Designate time every day to deal with email," she says. "Do a wrap up at the end of your day and make a to-do list so you can start fresh in the morning."

*"You can absolutely achieve bigger goals by taking charge of the clutter."
 - Karli Bertocchi of Organized With Style*

Organized With Style works throughout Chicagoland. Hourly rate: \$75. 773.678.9793

Jeanne Harms, Organize, Inc.

Organized thoughts: Harms got her start in hotel sales management, a fortuitous calling that forced her to be organized for her guests' sake. In 1998, a friend commented on the neatness of Harms' garage. "It was like a light bulb went on," Harms said. "I took a vacation day from work and attended a meeting of the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO). In 2002, Organize, Inc. was born.



A fresh perspective: "I founded my company to bring disarray to function," Harms explains. "I can actually see the end result before we even get started." Harms begins the organization process with a phone evaluation. "I encourage people to dream a little," she says. "The process is so rewarding." Organize, Inc. (Harms has three other organizers on staff) emphasizes enthusiasm and energy. "We have a ball," she says.

KO the clutter: "We identify a person's hot buttons, and start from there," Harms explains. She says that common organizational challenges include garages, basements and attics. "These areas tend to become dumping grounds," she says. "The average family can't put their cars in the garage." She asks clients to focus on if they use, need or love something. If not, they are encouraged to purge. Harms works with charities, resale shops and various recycling centers to dispose of junk properly. "Try to reuse and

*"Try to reuse and recycle instead of buying more."
 - Jeanne Harms of Organize, Inc.*

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Organizing clutter

Advice, tips, blogs and forums to help you get organized.
[FranklinCovey.com/GetC](#)

recycle instead of buying more," she advises.

Organize, Inc. covers the North Shore and western suburbs. Hourly rates vary from \$60-\$150, depending on location and number of organizers needed per project. 630.406.5881

Linda Goldman, Altogether Organized



Organized thoughts: Goldman worked in the corporate world in human resources, and began to wonder "what's next" for her. While pondering her passions in life, Goldman started organizing her files and closets, searching for clarity. In a perfect "timing is everything" scenario, she came across a newspaper article about professional organizers, and all of her questions were answered. She started small by organizing for friends, and Altogether Organized was founded in 2002. Goldman now has three organizers on staff.

A fresh perspective: "We take a non-judgmental approach and provide our clients a clear eye," Goldman says. "We try to teach them that anything is possible." Goldman says that professional organizers are there to provide focus. "We get people to work on one area at a time," she explains. She encourages people to be part of the entire process to make decisions along the way. "We present suggestions for lifestyle changes that will have a lasting impact."

KO the clutter: The organization process begins over the phone. "I ask clients to prioritize and start strategizing," Goldman says. In the first appointment, the Altogether Organized team helps sort through the first area, then moves on from there. Goldman provides ideas of places for donations and reselling opportunities. "People can easily refund the cost of their organization efforts," she says.

*"We present suggestions for lifestyle changes that will have a lasting impact."
- Linda Goldman of Altogether Organized*

Altogether Organized works throughout the North Shore and north side of Chicago. Hourly rates vary from \$60-\$70 depending on the organizer; weekends \$75 per hour. 847.266.9166

Monica Friel, Chaos to Order

*"If you keep too much, you can't find what's important."
- Monica Friel of Chaos to Order*

Organized thoughts: A professional organization pioneer, Friel launched Chaos to Order in 1990 and is a founding member of NAPO. Her desire to have an organized life started as a child and has been her guiding light. Friel built her company into a staff of organizers, each with their own specialties and styles of organizing. "Early on I thought about what I was passionate about," Friel explains. "Chaos to Order has been a great blessing."

A fresh perspective: The Chaos to Order system begins with a phone consultation, which matches organizers to clients. "I think that everyone has a desire to be organized," Friel says. "They just might not have the time or know where to start." She notes that

her staff is trained to take charge of organization projects, unlike a friend or family member, who may get you off track. "Hiring a professional organizer has many benefits," she says. "We keep emotions out of the process."

KO the clutter: "Organization is about efficiency," Friel explains. "If you keep too much, you can't find what's important." Perhaps surprisingly, Friel is not a proponent of multitasking. "Use time to your advantage by focusing on one thing before moving on to another," she says.

Chaos to Order covers the Chicagoland area. Hourly rates vary by project and organizer. 847.825.8400

Jane Carroo, Clutter Coach Company

Organized thoughts: Carroo's background as a life coach and teacher, as well as an interest in organization, led her to create the Clutter Coach Company. Both professions have informed her approach to working with people to guide their way to a better life. "Clients don't have to use both my life coaching and organization services together, but the two usually go hand in hand," Carroo explains. "I'm able to tap into their motivation by looking at the whole person." Carroo maintains that it's not about the clutter, but it's about what's going on inside the person. "I try to figure out what's inside and what they want to bring out into the world," she says.

*"A typical family doesn't use eighty percent of what they own."
- Jane Carroo of Clutter Coach*

A fresh perspective: Carroo, who has certified professional organizer status, likes to ask clients what help they have sought previously to deal with their clutter. "It's difficult to apply what people read in organization books to their own life," she explains. "A professional service offers customized solutions for the individual, from creating tailored filing systems to clearing out entire homes." The Clutter Coach Company has recently added the design and implementation of garage systems to their list of services.

KO the clutter: The Clutter Coach Company has put together a top 10 list of tips to help create external and internal harmony. Easy-to-employ highlights include setting aside time every day to organize (just 15 minutes a day equals 90 hours a year), as well as adopting a favorite charity for donations and hanging on to only what you use or love. "A typical family doesn't use eighty percent of what they own," Carroo attests.

Clutter Coach Company works in the north and northwest areas of Chicagoland. Hourly rates vary according to the project and the organizer. 847.776.8717

Christine Maringer, Divine Order and Divine Design Interiors

Organized thoughts: Maringer is the owner of Divine Order and Divine Design, two companies that work hand-in-hand to create harmonious homes. Maringer uses feng shui principles in her unique "one-day home makeovers." The first phase is decluttering, then using what you already own to

*"My services are like one-stop shopping to create your dream home."
- Christine Maringer of Divine Order and Divine Design Interiors*

build complete transformations. "My services are like one-stop shopping to create your dream home," Maringer says.

A fresh perspective: Maringer put together her proprietary system of organizing and filing after spending 25 years in the business world, 14 of which were spent as a law office manager. This structure, she maintains, has given her an edge. "Most businesses operate in the same ways," she says. She helps a lot of entrepreneurs set up their home-based businesses. "I support their creative sides by keeping their paperwork organized."

KO the clutter: Maringer guarantees her organization systems to be permanent because they are tailored to the individual. "It's a very intimate process," she says. "We physically do all of the work and create the systems together." She emphasizes that people need to separate the past, present and future. "Important keepsakes should be kept safe and sacred," she explains. "Your living space should consist of what you use and love now."

Divine Order and Divine Design Interiors services are offered throughout the Chicago area. Hourly rates vary by project. 773.561.8559



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