



Becoming a professional organizer

A self study course in the Clear & SIMPLE Systems



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The professional organizer industry

In response to the accumulation craze of the 1980's, a new profession and accompanying industry of services was born—professional organizing. At that time, individuals who had a natural knack for organizing began calling themselves “organizers” and, over time, the professional organizer industry was born. Gatherings began in living rooms and kitchens discussing whether this work could become a professional service industry. The movement continued to grow and has passed out of the infant stage. However, the industry is still quite young which means that it is still in the beginnings of its entrepreneur journey.

The industry has seen a tremendous growth each year and is now expanding to many countries around the world. (It was the demand from other countries for the Clear & SIMPLE Way that led to the renovation of this course in 2011). This makes for an exciting time to enter the industry and start a Professional Organizing business. The projection is for strong continued growth for the next decade.

There are two factors that have contributed most to the growth. The public is now exposed constantly in the media and other venues that Professional Organizers exist. Think about what messages you received and from where that led you to considering this as a vocation. Secondly, the need for organizing services keeps increasing with the overwhelming choices individuals make on a daily basis. Even young children and elderly are exposed to more stuff and more to do's than is realistic to maintain. People of all ages are reaching out asking for help.

The field of professional organizing serves both residential and business worlds. The professionals offer a wide range of organizing services, including:

- Organizing physical spaces
- Organizing tasks and projects
- Clutter clearing and chronic disorganization
- Setting up personalized systems
- Training in all different fields relating to organizing
- Managing time and goal setting
- Managing productivity and efficiency
- Managing strategic business development
- Professional Coaching



Understanding the profession



What is it that a professional organizer does exactly? Professional organizers change and bless lives by offering their clients a rare gift; a simple, orderly, maintainable life. This work is not about creating a perfect world or life. When you help your clients get organized, you provide them with an effective way to exercise control over chaos.

NAPO's definition: Professional organizers use tested principles and expertise to enhance the lives of clients. By designing custom organizing systems and teaching organizing skills, they help individuals and businesses take control of their surroundings, their time, their paper piles, their lives!

Here is a favorite definition by Deborah Mill, "A professional organizer is a personal consultant who provides structure, solutions and systems to increase productivity and reduce stress. We help others restore order to their lives, creating systems and helping them form new habits that enable them to live and work in a peaceful, none chaotic environment."

Getting organized:

- Establishes order and flow in the environment
- Increases the client's clarity, vision, and ability to set life goals
- Helps the client align their daily life with their value system
- Creates a way for clients to be present in relationships, creations and life
- Allows clients to clear emotional blockages and move forward
- Increases a client's productivity and ability to perform tasks
- Increases a sense of control over chaos, which promotes well-being
- Reigns in stress responses and creates new coping mechanisms
- Increases creativity and "thinking outside the box"
- Increases a client's time management skills



What attributes does a professional organizer typically have?

Although many types of people currently work as professional organizers, there are some distinguishing characteristics that support a successful organizing practice.

1. The ability to group items into like categories
2. The ability to envision an alternative reality
3. The ability to communicate your vision to your client
4. A neutral, non-judgmental attitude
5. Compassion for clutter and its effects
6. Personal confidence and a deep abiding belief that change is possible
7. Professional & orderly personal appearance
8. Exemplify good work ethics
9. Systematic approach to problem solving
10. Intuitive sense of the underlying meaning of “things”
11. Action-oriented and able to motivate others to action
12. Trusting of intuition and able to solutions with confidence
13. Passionate about the work and what it creates
14. Committed to helping others and the planet
15. Ability to be the “holding force” for change
16. Ability to reframe for both people and space
17. Match client with available products
18. Attention to detail all the way through a project
19. Ability to notice patterns and understand the underlying meaning

There are also common characteristics that can get in the way of serving others.

1. A tendency to think that my way is the “right way”
2. A sensitivity to clutter that interferes with the ability to serve
3. A compulsive need for completion or a specific timeline
4. A lack of patience for the process
5. Competent at organizing one’s self but not able to translate to others
6. Organizing is actually more a fun activity (a hobby) than a profession
7. A personality that is more comfortable working alone
8. A strong insistence on doing everything and won’t ask for help
9. A compulsive need to “fix” the environment or the person
10. A personal inability to organize a business that serves others



Identifying your strengths

Which of the traits listed above would you consider to be your top three personal strengths?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

What other personal traits have prepared you to become a professional organizer?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

What tendencies or traits do you have that might challenge you in growing a thriving consulting practice?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

What resources can you draw on to meet you these challenges?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

Describe your ideal client and how you could serve him/her. Consider the personality, the gender, the age range, the type of job, how the client finds you and whether they refer you. Go crazy on this and list everything you can. This is your opportunity to get clear on who you can best work with which leads to success on all levels.

A great resource to further use this tool is in your suggested reading, *Attracting Perfect Customers*, by Stacey Hall and Jan Brogniez.



NAPO (National Association of Professional Organizers)

It truly does take a unique combination of strengths and aptitudes to become an excellent professional organizer, the wonderful news is that most of these skills can be honed and any present shortcomings can be overcome. Even better, you won't be left trying to figure everything out yourself. There are numerous resources available to help you. On the national level, one of these resources is the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO), established in 1985. NAPO is a non-profit professional association whose members include organizing consultants, productivity experts, speakers, trainers, authors, and manufacturers of organizing products.

NAPO's purpose

NAPO's purpose is three-fold:

1. To promote organizing as a profession
2. To educate the public about the benefits and availability of professional organizing
3. To provide support, education, and networking for professional organizers

NAPO membership and contact information

NAPO has over 5000 members and is growing quickly. When you join NAPO, you become a member of the only international organization dedicated to promoting and supporting the field of professional organizing. NAPO's current contact information:

Phone: (856) 380-6828

Fax: (856) 439-0525

Internet: www.napo.net

Email: napo@napo.net

Currently you can become a member of NAPO without any certification or professional training. Your NAPO membership entitles you to discounts for conferences, includes a quarterly newsletter, and makes you a member of a strong referral network. It also carries weight with the media world and with your clients! NAPO is currently assessing the need and value of having multiple levels of membership with requirements in place. This would enhance the value of the membership along with the professional status.

Along with regular teleclasses, NAPO offers an annual conference that can inspire and educate you as you grow your business. For information on past and current conferences, see NAPO's website. There are ways to access the former workshops and speakers such as purchasing the recordings done each year.

Clear & SIMPLE is often present at NAPO conferences and Marla Dee, Clear & SIMPLE's founder, has taught workshops and led presentations at NAPO conferences throughout the years. Look for the Clear & SIMPLE booth in the Expo Hall along with many other vendors offering products and services just for this industry. Clear & SIMPLE has a gathering at the conference each year for all students and graduates. This is a favorite time to share the common bond found in using the Clear & SIMPLE approach.

Certified Professional Organizer (CPO®) credential

NAPO's sister organization, The Board of Certification for Professional Organizers (BCPO), has established a standardized credential for professional organizers that have proven their expertise in the field. This credential is known by the initials CPO® (Certified Professional Organizer). Anyone using the



initials CPO® after their name infers that they have passed the exam and have received NAPO's Certified Professional Organizer credential. Currently, applying for the CPO® exam credential is limited to consultants who can document a total of 1,500 hours of paid work experience in the past three years. This paid work experience may include, but is not limited to:

- On-site consulting
- Coaching
- Consulting
- Training
- Virtual Organizing
- Interactive Workshops
- Speaking Engagements

In addition to the documented paid hours, the CPO® credential requires satisfactory completion of an exam and payment of a fee.

This credential is NOT designed for the new organizer just starting a career. Prior to applying to BCPO for the CPO® credential, you will need to get training and hands-on experience from a variety of sources in order to meet the minimum training and field requirements.

For current requirements on becoming a Certified Professional Organizer (CPO) go to www.certifiedprofessionalorganizers.org or www.napo.net.

Note: Certification as a CPO® is not required to launch a professional organizing business. The Clear & SIMPLE Self Study course is a vital first step in preparing yourself for a successful career as a Professional Organizer. The purpose of the additional levels of training is to support you making it the CPO® credential if that is part of your business plan.





The Clear & SIMPLE systematic approach

Our systems make it simple!

The Clear & SIMPLE approach to organizing is unique. The Clear & SIMPLE Systems make organizing simple. While most professional organizing training programs teach consultants either how to organize a specific type of environment (such as a garage or an office), or how to organize a specific item (such as paper), Clear & SIMPLE teaches you **systems**. In this self study course, you'll be introduced to two master systems: (1) clear & SIMPLE foundation system called SEE IT, MAP IT, DO IT and (2) Clear & SIMPLE's action system called STACKS. After you learn the steps involved, you'll then learn how to apply these two systems to any situation or task. With these two master systems under your belt, you'll be prepared to successfully complete any organizing task you might encounter. Yeah!

SEE IT, MAP IT, DO IT

SEE IT, MAP IT, DO IT consists of three simple steps that lay the foundation for all organizing tasks:

1. **SEE IT—take a look at where you've been**

This step helps your client take a look at where've they've been and where they're at. The SEE IT step includes seeing your client (their personality type and habits) and their space.

2. **MAP IT—make a plan for where you want to go**

This step helps you identify the scope of the project and make a written plan for completing it. Getting the map in writing (including visual diagrams) helps to "ground" the project and makes it real for your client.

3. **DO IT—take the steps to create the change**

This step consists of taking the actions needed to implement the plan. These actions are taken in a certain order, which you will learn in the **S.T.A.C.K.S.** system.

Points of power

- Having the SEE IT. MAP IT. DO IT. foundational system allows you to step back any time the organizing process grinds to a halt:
 - SEE what is going on
 - MAP what is needed
 - DO the next right step
- Each of these three steps are different from each other in that they require a different mental focus and attention. Your clients are used to mixing them up into a chaotic soup, and never getting past one or two steps. Let them know you are going to teach them a way to deal with only one task at a time and that the organizing process will take less energy and be more fun when they learn to stay focused on the step they're on.



- The three steps build on each other. Your client (and the organizer) will tend to focus solely on the DO IT step, but this causes much frustration and wasted energy. It's up to you to educate your client that the steps need to be done in order, and one at a time for a reason. You can promise your client that if they will take the 15 minutes to "see" and "map" their current situation, it will save hours and money during the DO IT phase.

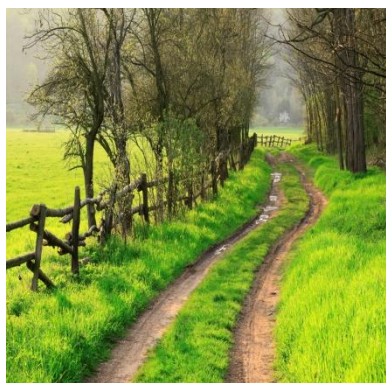
S.T.A.C.K.S.

STACKS is a series of actions that, taken one at a time, will guide you and your client successfully through any organizing project. STACKS is an acronym that stands for:

- **S**=Sort
- **T**=Toss
- **A**=Assign a home
- **C**=Contain
- **K**=Keep it up
- **S**=Simplify

STACKS is the action system. As mentioned, the power is taking one step at a time. Most clients have never been taught that there is a "step by step" approach to the DO IT part of getting organized. They are used to diving into the closet, starting to sort and within minutes getting completely caught up in what to keep, where to keep it and how to take care of it. In essence, when you teach them STACKS, you teach them the "skill" of how to get and stay organized. Then they are empowered to use this system over and over again with other projects. It is life changing! Having a step-by-step system will also save you pain, stress and frustration as you work with your client's stuff, which is quite different than working with your own.

Much more on this process to come!



*"When your piles become bring problems and you feel yourself get stuck.
In the mire of decisions, cause your systems run amuck.
And the clutter grows around you, until there's no place left to sit.
You need a simple system that will help you bit by bit.
SEE IT, MAP IT, DO IT, S.T.A.C.K.S. will get you through it..
These are clear & simple tools that are priceless little jewels.
SEE IT. MAP DO. DO IT., S.T.A.C.K.S. will get you through it..
On the road you soon will be to freedom, order, clarity".*

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SEE IT • MAP IT • DO IT®
Our systems make organizing SIMPLE!

Take each step below in order to save time, energy and money

	PURPOSE	ACTION: Choose one	REWARD
SEE IT	Take a look at where you've been.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write the story your clutter tells. • Draw the story. • Take pictures. • Answer questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What is working?</i> • <i>What is not working?</i> • <i>Where are you stuck and why?</i> 	You have a clear picture of where you are now.
MAP IT	Make a plan for where you want to go.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do a mind map. • Make a list or create a chart • Draw a picture or create a collage. • Write a description of your top three priorities. • Write your vision of what you really want. 	You have a map to guide, inspire, and move you forward.
DO IT	Take the actions to get there.	<p>Work through the STACKS system on the opposite side.</p> <p>S Sort T Toss A Assign C Contain K Keep it up S Simplify</p>	You have a system that will take you through you from start to finish.

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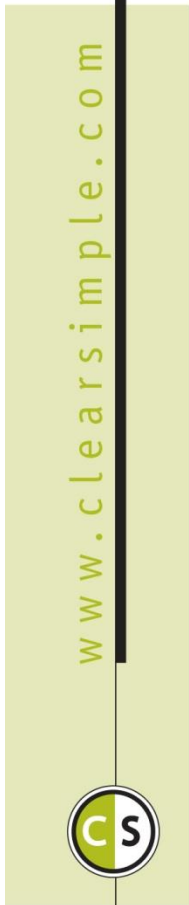
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S.T.A.C.K.S.®

Our systems make organizing SIMPLE!

Take each step in order and make only one decision at a time.



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	QUESTION	ACTION	TIP	REWARD
S SORT	What is it?	Sort into piles of like with like. *No other decisions yet!	Place items in banker's boxes. Label each box with a post-it note for steps ahead.	You will know exactly what you have.
T TOSS	Do I need it?	Put it in the "keep" or "discard" pile. Tackle one pile/one box at a time.	Ask, "Does this serve me in my life today?" Only let go when you are ready.	What you have left is what needs to be organized.
A ASSIGN A HOME	Where does it go?	Identify how you use the item and create activity zones accordingly.	Place the items you use most often in the easy- to-access locations.	Everything will be where you need it when you need it.
C CONTAIN	What does it go in?	Measure the "stuff" and the storage area before shopping.	Choose containers that are both functional and fun.	You will enjoy retrieving and re-storing your items.
K KEEP IT UP	How do I maintain it?	Create a simple plan for how you will maintain the area.	Choose a high energy time for upkeep.	Your keep-it-up system will make maintaining your space easier.
S SIMPLIFY	How can I live with less?	Decide whether any new items pass the test. >	Does it serve me? Do I love it? Will I use it? Do I have room for it?	You will feel free, energized, and abundant.

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