

# ASK the ORGANIZER....

Professional organizer, Sandra Lane is answering some of your questions. The answers may enlighten and lighten up your life.

## EMAIL OVERLOAD!!



**Q. I'm addicted to checking my email constantly and I can't get anything else done during my day. How can I use my time better and still stay connected?**

**A.** At the end of the day, do you look at your "to do" list and wonder why nothing has been completed? Checking your emails excessively and responding immediately could be the culprit. This habit is an interruption in your work flow and can distract you from focusing on your current tasks.

Here are a few ideas to help you to better manage your time and your inbox:

- 1.) If you are starting your day with a "to do" list (and we all do) ; refrain from checking your email first thing in the morning. Rather, schedule time later in the morning, mid afternoon and at the end of the day to peruse your inbox.
- 2.) During the designated time you set aside to work on your "to do" list, consider turning off any auditory or visual notifications to avoid the distraction of what's happening with your inbox.
- 3.) When you do check your inbox, go through the emails and sort into various action folders. For example, some emails are read only, others are read and respond later, immediate response or can be deleted right away.
- 4.) Consider keeping your inbox limited to those emails that require an immediate response. Once you have answered an email put it in an appropriate labeled folder or delete.
- 5.) When answering emails- keep them brief and to the point. If the email is getting lengthy and for only one person, perhaps a phone call would be a better use of your time.

When utilized correctly, email is a great time saver. Forming some new disciplines when addressing emails may be all that is required to keep you connected and still be productive elsewhere in your life.

## Entryway Clutter

**Q. My entryway is a cluttered mess!!! How can I keep this area clear?**

**A.** The entryway of any home, no matter the size, is a common place for clutter to collect. Mail, back packs, coats and shoes all end up here. The solution is to have a place for everything to live. Here are some ideas that should help:

- Large basket for shoes tucked under a bench for sitting.
- Hooks or a coat rack for outerwear and back packs. There are furniture pieces sold in stores that accomplish this task.
- A pretty bowl or basket for keys, change and other little things that come out of your pockets.
- A small container/basket for mail. I suggest small because I encourage folks to look through, sort, purge and file your mail daily.



## Magazines

**Q. I have so many magazines I'm saving for a recipe or article. How can I make it easy to find what I'm looking for?**

A. We all have good intentions to use a decorating idea, recipe or review an article from a magazine. However, if there are piles of magazines to sift through, it's nearly impossible to efficiently search and retrieve.

Solution: Tear out the full-page article, recipe, etc. and slip it into a 3-hole, clear sheet protector (available at all office supply stores). Using loose-leaf binders, create a specific subject to hold your information. For example, a recipe binder can hold your full page recipes and be divided into categories such as casseroles, appetizers, desserts, breads, etc. Added bonus, the sheet protector keeps them clean while cooking in the kitchen.

## Simplifying your Life

**Q. Help, my life is so hectic. How can I live more simply?**

A. If you are looking for more time and/or a less complicated lifestyle- here are a few tips that might be helpful:

- ❖ Idle time in front of a screen could mean more time for you or your family.
- ❖ Let go of the idea that everything has to be perfect.
- ❖ Always keep a backup of regularly used items in your home.
- ❖ Pay your bills online.
- ❖ Keep a stash of blank note cards on hand - these can work for any occasion and save you a trip to the store. I also use Send Out Cards (online card store that can mail the card for you too)
- ❖ A mid-week cleanup of bathrooms is easy if you keep an all-purpose cleaner and paper towels underneath each sink in your house.
- ❖ Enclose necessary coupons, gift cards, etc in an envelope and use the front of the envelope as your shopping list.
- ❖ Sort through your mail on daily basis.
- ❖ Reclaim some kitchen cabinet or counter space by getting rid of those rarely, if ever used gadgets like the bread machine, food sealer, pasta maker, etc.
- ❖ Limit your decorative knick knacks to help make dusting the house much easier.
- ❖ Cancel subscriptions to catalogs that you can view online.
- ❖ If you will use an item rarely, consider borrowing it instead of buying it.
- ❖ Every season, go through your clothes and shoes and donate when possible.
- ❖ Wipe down shelves in the fridge before you grocery shop. This makes it easier to make a shopping list.
- ❖ When planning your day, try to avoid scheduling in every minute.
- ❖ When you use something, put it back where it belongs.
- ❖ Schedule time for yourself. Get it on the calendar or it will not happen.
- ❖ Pack non-perishables into your kid's lunch boxes the night before. This saves a few minutes in the morning.
- ❖ Stop unnecessary volunteering and don't feel guilty about it.
- ❖ Create a "to do" list everyday. This can help keep you from getting distracted. Use a timer set in 30 minute increments to work exclusively on your list.
- ❖ Learn to delegate.

Getting your Life in Order!!



About the Author: **Sandra Lane of Organization Lane, LLC**

Sandra Lane has 25 years of experience in helping individuals and businesses get organized and improve their time management.

Sandra provides organizing services to residential and small businesses. Sandra's partnership with each client goes beyond clutter elimination to include the setup of productive organizing systems, access to useful resources, coaching of constructive habits in organization and time management, maintenance follow-up and a commitment to see a project reach its end goal.

Sandra is a member of the Wexford WBN Chapter and a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers, currently serving as Membership Director for the Pittsburgh Chapter.