

Top 10 Considerations in Becoming a Professional Organizer

Interested in becoming a Professional Organizer? Consider the following:

There are many ways to enter the field of professional organizing. The majority of NAPO members run their own businesses, while others act as independent contractors or are employed by an organizing company. If you choose to run your own company, you will use your organizing skills and also need to draw on business skills. The running of a business is perhaps the most important and, for some, the most daunting. There is more to running a business than being organized.

Be prepared to wear many hats as a small-business owner, such as accountant, marketer, bookkeeper, and the like. Don't be afraid to outsource these jobs—it pays to hire someone to do what you can't.

Do you prefer to work alone or with others? Many organizers thrive when working in teams. Consider collaborating with another person when you set up shop.

Take stock of your financial needs. Start-ups often spend 80% of the first year's income on marketing, with the expectation that those percentages will reverse themselves. In order to know whether this career will meet your financial goals, determine what you must make (net) in a year and work backwards from that. For example, if you need to bring home \$26,000/year, you need to have \$500/week coming in after all expenses and taxes are paid. That figure does not factor in vacation time, sick days, and cancellations.

It is helpful to have financial resources such as credit lines and savings to draw from as a start-up business. Consider obtaining a line of credit before you need it—it's easier to qualify when you don't need it than when you do.

These are some of the most common abilities and qualities that successful professional organizers demonstrate. Do you have what it takes?

Ability to listen and infer what a client means

Ability to customize organizational systems to meet client needs, not yours

Consulting/coaching skills—ability to ask the right questions to encourage the client to come up with the answer

Ability to teach and pass on skills

Ability to visualize spatially

Ability to see the big picture and break goals down into manageable steps

Ability to categorize and plan ahead

Physical and mental endurance

Compassion

Responsibility

Professionalism

A professional image will be important, because this is how the world sees you and your business. Credibility and professionalism go hand in hand. You'll want to put the "professional" in Professional Organizer. You represent not only yourself but also the entire industry. Start with the area of organizing that you are passionate about, but keep an open mind to other niches to expand your horizons. Expand your skills as your business develops, through reading, teleclasses, conferences, networking, and NAPO involvement.

Joining NAPO will keep you abreast of new products, books, and business trends in the organizing industry.