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NEWS LEADER

Is desk too cluttered? Try professional help

By Alice Walsh, News-Leader

When Mary Pankiewicz, a professional organizer, stopped in at the Amelia Island-Fernandina Beach-Yulee Chamber of Commerce last month, fellow staff members teasingly said, "Oh, you should take a look at Sandy's

desk!"

It seems that Special Events Coordinator Sandy Price kept an impressively uncoordinated workspace, and agreed that she had something to learn about organizing the many projects and mountain of paperwork she dealt with on a daily basis. Here, ready and willing to help, was a certified member of the National Association of Professional Organizers.

Pankiewicz convinced Price that she would enjoy her upcoming vacation even more if she could leave with everything in order, so on May 19 Pankiewicz transformed the coordinator's immediate

workspace into an organized, efficient system that not only looked good but worked beautifully,

with all documents easily retrievable and unlikely to be misplaced or lost.

"Sandy was doing many things correctly," said Pankiewicz, "but the fact that she had to be in and out of her office so often during the day had contributed to the clutter. She has much 'post-event' work to do, and, since she is a visual person, she would leave everything out so that she could see what needed to be done."

Pankiewicz suggested that she keep the visual reminders by writing projects on her calendar instead. "People usually write appointments on their calendar, but don't usually think about writing that day's work projects on it as well."

She also suggested that projects be kept in folders with clear jackets, and that Price, a strongly visual person, use a different color for each event. For example, everything pertaining to the shrimp festival would be in green folders, affording instant visual identification of the project.

"Four times more work can be accomplished if you focus on one project at a time," she advised Price, "and don't read or answer e-mails, take phone calls or allow any other interruptions during that allocated time."

Pankiewicz customizes each of her organizational projects according to the client. "Different people have different ways of working

and different needs," she says. "A system that may work fine for one person may not be a good fit for another.

"Sometimes we put off tackling big projects because we are waiting until we have enough time. Since busy people seldom have large segments of free time to devote to a particular job, breaking it into 15-minute work periods can get you started - and finished - before that large period of free time ever happens."

"Always stand when sorting a messy desk or stagnant stacks of papers. Research shows that you have more blood in your brain when you are on your feet and you will make better and faster decisions while standing."



Special Events Coordinator Sandy Price of the Amelia Island-Fernandina Beach-Yulee Chamber of Commerce finds the clutter on her desktop overwhelming, above. After professional organizer Mary Pankiewicz works her magic, Price finds the pressure lifted, and is delighted with a new, efficient system custom-made just for her.

These and many other suggestions are addressed in Pankiewicz's book, *Clutter-free & Organized*. This speaker, consultant and author has been quoted in *Woman's Day* and the *Wall Street Journal*, does a regular television segment on NBC and presents organizing seminars nationally.

While she now lives in Morristown, Tenn., Pankiewicz grew up on Amelia Island and delighted in making the family junk room orderly. She likes to talk about those days, but was determined not to run her household as tightly as her parents ran theirs.

"Being a neatnik is in my genes, I suppose, but life is not about being organized. My philosophy is that organization should support us in life, not control us," she says.

"I love my work. Helping people get organized and learn how to stay organized is very satisfying to me, because I feel I am contributing to other people's quality of life."

Need help getting it all together? Pankiewicz can be reached at 1-888-835-6335. For further information, visit her website at www.clutterfree.biz.

awalsh@fbnewsleader.com