



CUSTOMLIVING
SOLUTIONS

Special Report: **The Top 12 Mistakes to Avoid when Getting Organized**

Joshua Zerkel, Certified Professional Organizer®, Productivity Strategist

For more information on other programs and services, email us at
info@customlivingsolutions.com.

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About Joshua Zerkel's Custom Living Solutions

Custom Living Solutions, the premier Professional Organizing service for the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond, is dedicated to bridging the gap between the way you live...and the way you *want* to live. Getting organized can help you:

- Cut clutter
- Save time and money
- Be more productive
- Make the most of your home or office
- Maximize efficiency



A Message from Joshua Zerkel, Certified Professional Organizer® and Founder of Custom Living Solutions

“After more than seven years as a professional designer, I came to the realization that I had reached a plateau in my career. My technical skills and problem-solving abilities had been cultivated. I had worked with clientele of all types and sizes—from Fortune 500 companies, to personal businesses. And I had traveled far up the corporate ladder. But something was still missing.

Human relationships. I missed having my time and efforts being focused on something—someone—that I believed in. So I began looking for a way to incorporate my professional skills and experience with my passion—helping people. The outcome? Custom Living Solutions.

More than just an "organizational provider", Custom Living Solutions is, for me, the ultimate combination of my professional know-how, and desire to make people's lives the best they can be. It is this balance of expertise and intimacy that sets us apart, and it is with this goal in mind that we approach each and every client.

We look forward to doing the same for you — ”

Joshua Zerkel, Certified Professional Organizer ©
Productivity Strategist

Member

National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO)
President, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter (NAPO-SFBA)

Subscriber

National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization (NSGCD)

Featured Blogger and Columnist

FranklinCovey
OrganizingConnection.com
OnlineOrganizing.com
The Organizing Network

Organizer of the Month

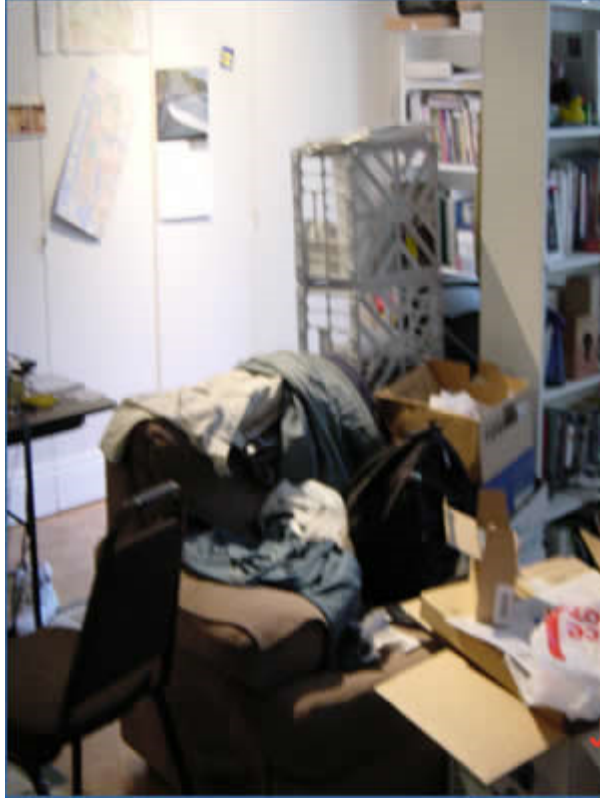
OnlineOrganizing.com
Organize Magazine

Organizing Instructor

SBA – San Francisco



Before & After





CUSTOMLIVING
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Client Testimonials

CLS is great at what they do! It goes without saying that they can organize your home and/or office (or any other facility for that matter). But they go beyond file folders and shelves. **CLS empowers people with better strategies, improved living/working habits, and encouragement for how to remove the clutter from their lives.** They'll help you be happier.

Korin Crawford
President, Bubble Media Inc.

The office organization is working out really well! The bookkeeper LOVES it, she says my office the best place to work out of 20 other clients.

Rebecca Fulton, Paragon Remodel

My business has increased tremendously, and with numerous projects going on, there is a lack of time to get organized and put work away where it belongs. Over time, it became chaotic and unorganized. We contacted Josh Zerkel of Custom Living Solutions, who **helped me take control of my space to be more effective and efficient.** It is now **functional and peaceful.** Best of all, it is a pleasure to work with Josh. **I highly recommend Custom Living Solutions for any planning or organizing need.**

Rick Thng
Package Designer, Imprezziv

My workspace is small and I do a variety of duties. At the end of the day, my workspace used to be a big mess. I realized I used my space and my time inefficiently and this led to losing money. I wanted to make my space conducive to maximizing my business opportunities. **Joshua's genius file system has made my office a "working paradise."** The new organizational systems he created bring me joy, and I now have more time to serve my clients. At the end of the day I'm less tired and have more time and energy for my family! **If you'd like to have the same feeling of finally being free of clutter, call Joshua.**

Lucy Logvinova
Insurance Agent, Farmers Insurance

I'm messy. Many a boss has asked me to keep my office neater, and I have always found it virtually impossible. **Josh and Custom Living Solutions have helped me become a new person.** I have an organized work space which is fantastic. More importantly, **I have a system that allows me to continue to be organized and as a result, neater, cleaner and able to present a more professional image to my clients.** (Not to mention how much easier it is to find things in files versus piles). My colleagues were so impressed and amazed, they now use Josh's services too! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Julie Shumate
Sr. Loan Consultant, First Capital Group



Client Testimonials

Custom Living Solutions and Josh Zerkel designed and helped me to implement a **custom infrastructure for all my personal and business related papers, emails and important files**. He has helped me lay an efficient foundation from which I can more easily expand my business.

Richard Turtletaub, Illustrator

The benefits of Josh's work is not just that I now have a **logical and simple organizing system for my computer files, emails and paper**. Nor it is that **I am becoming more productive**. It's the **gain in my own self-respect** for taking action on an old bug-bear. Josh is patient and brilliant.

Leng Lim, Personal Coach

I work in a very small office, and before Joshua came to help me, my important projects were in cardboard boxes on the floor, my office supplies literally spilled onto the floor, and the tiny space was cluttered with various electronic externals like a printer, a copier, a fax.

In 2 hours, **he suggested things that are changing my work life**. Perhaps most importantly, he opened my eyes. As a journalist who is easily distracted, **I am more productive already**, and I can see how much more productive and happy I will be in my space I will be when this process is finished.

Katy Butler, Writer



The Top 12 Mistakes to Avoid when Getting Organized

Getting your clutter under control and your life in order can dramatically affect how you function in the world, how effective you are at work, and how much you enjoy life. It's an honor for us at Custom Living Solutions to be able to help people like you live and work the way they want to – all by getting more organized!

Before people work with us, typically they have tried to get organized on their own. Usually, they are able to get started (or at least get motivated to get started) getting organized, but they hit a roadblock that keeps them from making real progress. Some of the mistakes people make can delay the organizing process, while others can completely derail it:

Mistake #1: Organizing can be completed during your free time

“You know what? I'll go through my papers when I have some extra minutes.”

I'm not sure who has this elusive “free time,” but I'm pretty sure that most of us don't have enough of it. Even if by some miracle we do happen to have a few spare moments, it's pretty unlikely that we are going to make much headway on an organizing project when we don't devote a chunk of time to it – and that's assuming that we'd want to spend our free time organizing at all! When you don't plan time to work on staying organized and boosting your productivity, you're actually missing out on opportunities to streamline your processes, which can in turn help free up some of your time.

Mistake #2: Thinking getting organized will take more time than it really will

“I want to get organized, but it's going to take forever!”

Getting organized does take some time, but most people tend to overestimate how long it will take. This is especially true when you don't have a lot of organizing experience under your belt – without that, how can you gauge how long you'll spend organizing your desk or your papers? By overestimating, it can make a manageable organizing project seem insurmountable and just too hard to do, and when things look hard, it's easy to give up. That's why it's essential to have at least a ballpark idea of what's involved in a project, break it down into chunks, and schedule time to work on those pieces.

Mistake #3: Underestimating the importance of being organized

“I shouldn't have to spend my time getting organized, right?”

If you are currently less organized than you'd like to be, it can affect you in a variety of ways – lost productivity, frustration, overwhelm, and embarrassment, just to name a few. If this is you, getting organized is definitely a good use of your time and your resources, because it's an investment in yourself. Getting your systems in place and learning the skills to keep them that way can serve you well in all areas of your life. Also, reminding yourself how important getting organized and the results that it will bring can help keep you motivated throughout the organizing process.



Mistake #4: Not realizing the financial cost of disorganization

"I'd like to get organized, but it will cost a lot of money."

Getting organized on your own or with a Professional Organizer generally isn't free, it's true, but it's not as expensive as you might think. Consider how much your time is worth, and how much of it you might be wasting right now with inefficient processes, lost productivity, cluttered storage, and the general bad feelings that come from being disorganized. Use this formula to determine just how much disorganization is costing you:

How many hours per week do you waste being disorganized? _____

Your hourly rate _____

Total cost per week (Hourly rate times wasted hours per week) _____

Total cost per year (Total cost per week times 52) _____

Is disorganization costing you more than you thought? In addition to the dollar value of your time, think about the other immaterial costs of not being as organized as you'd like – missed opportunities, overwhelm, and loss of self-esteem. The investment in getting organized can help empower you to change these patterns and can give you back your time.

Mistake #5: Shopping = Organizing

"If I just buy the right containers, I'll get organized."

On your own, you may be tempted to simply "buy yourself organized" by taking trips to an organizing supply store and buying lots of organizing tools and gizmos that the salesperson might recommend, without them really knowing your situation or seeing your space. I've seen so many people waste a lot of money by buying organizing supplies that they just don't need, then bring them back to their home or office where the "tools" end up becoming just more clutter. When you make the investment of working with a Professional Organizer, they can assess what your needs are very quickly, recommend the right tools for the job, and then efficiently help you implement them. You can actually save time and money by having an organizer help you make the right purchases!

Mistake #6: Taking on too large a project

"I'm going to organize my home office this weekend."

When you try to get organized on your own, it's tempting to want to "just get it done" by trying to do a project in one fell swoop, and usually in a compressed amount of time. Just imagine – you've decided to organize your storage in one weekend, and by halfway through Saturday, everything is a mess, you're frustrated and tired, and just give up. The project is actually in a worse state than when you started, and now you are left to deal with even more disorganization than before! This is why it's so important to identify what pieces of your organizing project are doable in the amount of time you have available, and then attack them with a step-by-step plan of action.



Mistake #7: Assuming organizing is an automatic skill

“Shouldn't I already know how to get organized?”

We each have unique talents, skills, and abilities – some that come to us naturally, and others that we spend time and effort developing. Knowing how to organize is the same as any other skill – some of us are great at it, while other struggle. Most of us are never taught how to organize (after all, organizing isn't taught in school), and so for many of us, we muddle through with whatever techniques we pick up along the way. Some of us learn great skills, and some of us don't. If you didn't pick up great organizing skills, it's easy to feel bad about it, like somehow you should automatically know this stuff via cultural osmosis. Instead of beating yourself up over what organizing skills you don't know, give yourself credit for the accomplishments you have made, and remember that being able to organize is a skill, like any other, and can be learned at any stage of your life.

Mistake #8: Other people's organizing strategies should work for you

“Everyone else's files are alphabetical, shouldn't mine be, too?”

The way most of us learn to organize is by watching what other people do, and then trying our best to adapt their strategies for ourselves. The problem with this is that these are not YOUR strategies or tactics – they are used by someone who has a different way of thinking than you do, in a different situation, and with different stuff. In order for any organizing system to work, it needs to be customized to meet your needs, not the needs of a co-worker, spouse, or friend. Once systems are designed for you, you'll find they are a lot easier to use and maintain.

Mistake #9: Systems in books can “cure” disorganization

“I read the “XYZ Organizing” book, but I'm still disorganized!”

There are many great books available about organizing and productivity, and the truth is, most have some good ideas in them which you could, in theory, use to get inspired and then get more organized. The challenge comes when you try to implement all the ideas in a book, instead of picking and choosing which strategies resonate with you and meet your needs. I've seen plenty of people try all the strategies in a book, and either get overwhelmed or just give up because they can't do them all. Since the book is not a consultant, it's up to you to decipher what the right ideas for you to implement are, and which ideas to toss. Don't ever feel like a book is a map to helping you get organized – think of it more as a recipe that you get to add or remove ingredients from to make it yours.

Mistake #10: Working without a plan

“I'll just organize my house this weekend.”

Here's how it happens: You decide to get your office organized, so you give yourself a day or a weekend to do it. You go into your office on Saturday, and you're not sure where to begin, so you start by going through the piles that are on your desk. After an hour or two, you start getting bored and things are looking a bit messier than before, so you decide to take a break and check your email. Before you know it, an hour goes by and your office still is in worse shape than when you started. It's lunchtime, so you go out and get a bite to eat – you'll work on the office when you get back. By the time you return, you decide you'd rather do something else with your weekend besides get organized, and you give up.

Sound familiar? This scenario is pretty typical when you try to get organized without a plan in place.



Without a plan, how will you know how you are going to attack the various projects that will help you get from point A to point Organized? It's essential to develop a strategy for organizing that will help break down your organizing projects into manageable pieces – and that won't leave you with a big mess in the process.

Mistake #11: Trying to get organized without support

“I feel like when I'm getting organized, I'm on my own.”

Anytime you try to make changes in your life, whether you're getting fit, learning a language, or building new habits around organizing and productivity, it's always a good idea to get support from the people around you. This support can come from friends, co-workers, or loved ones, or from an outside professional, like a personal trainer, instructor, or Professional Organizer. For many people, the process of getting organized is fraught with uncertainty, embarrassment, and frustration – not generally a recipe for success when you're trying to make changes. I've seen so many well-intentioned people start the organizing process and give up – mostly because there was nobody there to back them up and give them support. This is why it's so important to have someone there to cheer you on throughout the process – they can help get you started and keep you going.

Mistake #12: Forgetting that organizing is a journey, not a destination

“If I just finish this one project, I'll finally be done getting organized!”

Organizing is about more than tidying up your stuff or about saving some time during your week. Of course, those things are really important and great goals, but getting organized is really a process of making changes to the habits that don't serve you well, and instead building new skills and new habits that will help get you closer to how organized you'd like to be. It's really key to note that while you can finish an organizing project, the process of getting organized is one that will continue. Your systems will need to be maintained by you or by someone, your strategies will likely need to be tweaked over time, and in the future you may need to complete another big organizing project. The difference is that at that point, you'll have a new set of tools and skills to make the process a lot easier – and maybe even enjoyable!



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Do any of those mistakes sound familiar? If so, you're not alone. Most of the people we work with at Custom Living Solutions have tried to get organized on their own, but have run into one or more of the challenges above. We are here to help you overcome the obstacles that are keeping you from being as organized and productive as you can be, so that you can get back to the things that are important to you – whether it's boosting your bottom line or spending more time with your loved ones.

Instead of continuing to struggle with getting organized on your own, give us a call at **415-830-6345** and learn more about how we can help you get from where you are now to how organized you'd like to be!

Joshua Zerkel, Certified Professional Organizer ©
Productivity Strategist
Founder, Custom Living Solutions