

# De-Clutter Your Life

By Evelyn R. Preston



**Everyone—even non-investors—wants to know: Where's America headed; when will the economy, jobs, the market, improve? No answers yet! Seniors do best by sticking to plans and finalizing all-important financial chores from diversification to organization! React prudently and act productively.**

Consider all that in-coming info that's piled up or filed away often to disappear forever. If it's imperative to store some records and receipts for easy access (physically / on computer), it's ineffective to stash massive amounts of: investment reports, insurance statements, medical records, etc. as well as the "maybe I'll need this someday" stuff.

**This column regularly repeats** the urgency, usefulness and special gift to our children and heirs of culling our correspondence. Start now—don't wait—a desk drawer a day, a file an hour—de-cluttering is in! From older than 7 years tax returns to over 3 years bank info, downsizing is mandatory and marvelously liberating.

Or hire an organizer! Lori Krolik CPES, of *More Time for You*, suggests a first step—realize how much paper or computer "overweight" you actually are. I've paraphrased her personal survey to pinpoint productivity, a crucial element in enhancing the retirement years.

On a scale of 1- strongly disagree... to 7 - strongly agree, evaluate the real you:

- 1) I do not waste time looking for important papers
- 2) I can easily find any info I need on my computer
- 3) I have plenty of space in my office
- 4) I have a great system for managing important papers
- 5) I have a great system for regularly purging outdated materials
- 6) I'm rarely overwhelmed by what I need to do
- 7) I have phone/address info at my fingertips
- 8) I know others can easily find what they need when I'm not here

**I'll add my mother's mantra...** have a place for everything and everything's in its place!

Although most organizers will help clients devise a system, Lori focuses on the "productivity angle"—how well we handle the "business of life." Do you keep active files, an in-box: electronic or desktop?

**Automatic Payments:** I never missed paying my bills on time... except one month when I was away... and quickly learned that the new Credit Card Laws allow heavy penalties for paying even one day late on top of finance charges. I now allow the credit card company to debit my bank account via Internet on the due date.

**Productivity Angle:** Other automatic payments can go straight to a credit card in order to earn "rewards" miles or cash points. Watch for "deals" which can nicely increase the number of points.

**Backup Strategy:** Don't trust any one system, even papers at attorney or tax preparer. Cloud computing relegates your on-line life to the outer limbo; copy to disc or paper.

**Productivity Angle:** Keeping (originals or copies) policies, deeds, trusts, pink slips, etc. together, fireproofed and /or ready to grab in an emergency also keeps you healthy (peace of mind), wealthy (no lost assets) and wise (financial life at your fingertips.)

**Plan Ahead:** Assisted living, long term care, pets' futures, funeral arrangements and pre-gifting heirlooms require careful thought, info gathering and "second opinions" not made in haste.

**Productivity Angle:** Making your personal wishes known, paid for or set in advance helps erase emergencies, becomes cost effective, avoids family friction and reduces the trauma of transitions.

One person's organizational system does not fit all. But these concerns could have a significant impact on your personal well-being and bottom line bank account. Start now!

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