

# Organize Your Space Organize Your Life

By Debra Hazel

Childhood habits have become a successful career for professional organizer Barbara Reich, founder of Resourceful Consultants LLC. From streamlining cabinets and closets to addressing overflowing email inboxes and unmanageable social calendars, Reich works with high-end clients around New York to simplify their surroundings.

"I've always been super organized. It's in my DNA. Even as a little girl, I didn't like people sleeping over at my house because I didn't like them touching my stuff," said Barbara, the author of the 2012 book *Secrets of an Organized Mom*. "When I later became a management consultant, my greatest success was my project management skills."

Her skills and inclination became a career after she became a mom to twins. "I'd go on play dates with them and I'd reorganize the play room or the sitting room," Barbara laughed. "If you're the person who does that, you become very popular."

At the same time, she'd get calls from friends or friends of friends, asking to learn more about her routines so they could manage their own children and households better.

"This wasn't any kind of a career when I started. When I was a management consultant, I had read an article about people who



**Barbara Reich makes sense of clutter and order out of chaos**

did this and it stayed in the back of my mind. By the time my children were about a year old, and I had gone out on my own, a friend from my management consultant days said a friend wanted to hire someone to set up his home office. She suggested me, and that's how this started," Reich said.

From there, the business grew by word of mouth among well-to-do Manhattanites, to the point where time with Barbara has become a status symbol.

"One of the most common mistakes that keep people disorganized is not grouping like things together," she said. "People store batteries in different places in their homes, so you never know how many you have or when you're out," she said. "Whether it's batteries, black sweaters or magic markers, keep them all in one place."

Another error is that people buy too much of a single item, fearing they'll run out at a critical moment. "You live in New York City. You can get toilet paper in five minutes," she noted. "It's a detriment to storage solutions to buy in bulk here."

Each of Barbara's projects is different, and so, too, is her response. Often she'll ask clients to send pictures of the areas to be organized prior to the first appointment. "This enables me to come up with a plan and hit the ground running when I arrive at the client's home," she explained.



Photos by Yolanda Perez and Bonnie Lautenberg

Usually booked at least three weeks in advance, Barbara generally sees at least two clients a day. She insists that the client be present, which may be harder than you think.

"I have well-known, busy clients who often ask if I can work with their assistants. I tell them that if they're not committed to working with me personally, I can send one of my associates. Whether they work with me or with one of my associates, they need to be there for the majority of the time. It's more efficient, and they will have a better understanding of the organizing systems I design for them."

Clients have responded. When she was moving to a new apartment, Bonnie Williams of Prada USA called upon Barbara to organize a collection of accessories and clothing gathered over a long career in luxury retail.

"I have quite a collection of designer bags, shoes and clothing. They were piled all over my apartment," she recalled. "I knew that without professional help, I would have the same mess in a different apartment."

"Barbara was involved in every aspect of the move, from supervising the movers to furnishings, storage and emotional support," Bonnie added.

"Everything in my apartment has a place, and everything is labeled," she said. "I can see all of my clothing and shoes, which is no small feat, so I'm wearing more things and enjoying getting dressed in the morning. I feel calmer in my home."

Pharmaceutical executive Judy Michaelson called upon Barbara to help her see her just-renovated apartment in a new light. The pair organized Judy's home office, master bedroom, clothing, jewelry, pantry and even her children's school supplies.

"Everything Barbara suggested made so much sense and has worked so well for us," Judy says. "I'm a super Type-A personality. Barbara is that on steroids. I call her the Organizer's Organizer."

Business for Resourceful Consultants has expanded from decluttering closets to time management and more.

"People are completely overwhelmed, and the demands on their time are relentless," she said. "With today's 24/7 technology, no one can get away. Now, as part of time management, I do a lot of electronic decluttering, helping people organize files on their computer, or ensuring they can find photos quickly."

With her nutritionist partner Lara Metz, she even organizes kitchens, not just in terms of gadgets, but nutritionally as well. She also helps clients get control of their time and habits.

"I often start working with space issues, and from there we get into life issues," Barbara said. "We start with organizing their spaces, and end up organizing their lives."



**Top:** Same-size see-through baskets and stackable compartmentalized trays make order out of chaos in this utility/laundry room.



**Left:** Arranging like items together by size in transparent containers, baskets or their original bottles, jars and boxes makes for a well-organized pantry.

In a way, she also helps to sell their homes, consulting on staging apartments, which typically entails eliminating much of the contents. She also supervises movers so clients return to a completely organized new home. Resourceful Consultants now includes five or six associates working with Barbara as needed.

She makes sure to follow up with clients after the job is complete. Both Judy and Bonnie note that they have maintained Barbara's systems. But some jobs are never really done.

"It's a very intimate relationship," Barbara said. "I'm a trusted resource, so with some clients I'll visit monthly for eternity. With others, I train the housekeeper, and I label everything and take pictures of everything so they can keep it that way. And as life changes—if someone has another baby or they buy the apartment next door, I'll return, working with architects and decorators on space planning. My service, while not inexpensive, changes my clients' lives."



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# PAMPERED PETS

