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Home-Based Business Profile: Professional Organizer

Editor's Note: This is the first of an occasional article profiling at-home businesses. If there is a home-based business you would like to read about in this newsletter, please email [Sarah](#).

Valerie Ottinger of Edgewater, Fla., started New Outlook Organizing nine months ago. “I help people organize their homes and home offices, so they can have a new outlook on life,” she says.

She decided to start her own business because she wanted a job that would be flexible yet full time, with a steady income, and one that could easily accommodate the children she and her husband hope to have soon. “I love to organize things, and for years, I’ve helped friends and family get organized.” Valerie confesses. “It occurred to me to build this into a business, where I can dictate my own hours, do something I love, move the business with me wherever we go, and work it around raising a family.”

Valerie’s inherent organization abilities coupled with research she’s gathered over the years helped her to establish her business. She took a few telecourses and pursued other professional development opportunities in order to enhance her business and broaden her skills range.

She managed to keep her start-up costs to the bare minimum because she already had some of the necessary office supplies (computer, printer, office furniture, software, cell phone, Internet connection). She paid between \$500 and \$700 for her membership in National Association of Professional Organizers, business license costs in Florida, business cards, and a couple of courses. “That is a very conservative estimate compared to normal startup costs for a professional organizing business, which can be \$1,000 to \$2,000,” says Valerie.

Rates for a professional organizer range from \$25 to \$50 per hour for residential organization and up to \$90 per hour or more for corporate/business organizing. Other factors in determining rates include locality, organizer’s experience and special circumstances, such as organizing a hoarder’s home, as well as the complexity of the problem. Valerie says she can make up \$3,500 per month working full time. “One week, I might work almost 40 hours, while the next week could require just 10 or 15 hours, depending on how many clients I’m working with at the time,” she says.

One of the hardest things about any business is getting the word out about that business. Valerie says word of mouth generates the most new business as “satisfied clients are the best marketing tools.” She cultivates relationships with other professionals who can send her referrals, such as real estate agents, interior designers, moving companies and home staging professionals. She also conducts workshops—both for free and paid—on topics

that can assist people in getting organized in specific areas, which can lead to other opportunities. “Since I’m still building my business, and on a very small budget, I’m researching creative marketing strategies that cost little or nothing to implement,” she adds.

For Valerie, professional organization allows to do something she really enjoys while helping people improve their quality of life. While her business can be a bit unpredictable, she expects that will change as she gains experience and her client base grows. “I’m a person who likes knowing what to expect,” she says. “Obviously, that can’t always be the case in life, so this career is stretching me in ways I never imagined – which is a good thing!”

Her advice for others seeking to launch a professional organizing business is to read books about the industry first to see if it’s a good fit and use the time when you are starting your business—and there are fewer clients to fill your schedule—to concentrate on training and additional research about the business. “Most of all, find other beginners and a mentor for support,” she recommends.

Thus far, Valerie is enjoying her work-from-home professional organizing business. Things are going well enough that she already has her eye the future. “While I do hands-on organizing in people’s homes right now, I also want to add phone coaching and online coaching, which would enable me to work from home even more,” she says.

Resources

Born to Organize: Everything You Need to Know About a Career as a Professional Organizer by Sara Pedersen

How to Start a Home-Based Professional Organizing Business by Dawn Noble

[National Association of Professional Organizers](#)

[OnlineOrganizing.com](#)

[Organizer U](#)

Organizing For a Living: How to Build a Profitable Career as a Professional Organizer by Jackie Tiani.