



I Did it with MS. Simplicity, time to organize your life!

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Melissa Schmalenberger of [I Did it with MS. Simplicity](#)

Melissa Schmalenberger saves lives. Alright, that is somewhat of an exaggeration, but what she does can be life changing. Schmalenberger is the woman behind [I Did it with MS. Simplicity Organizing](#), a company that specializes in home and office organization and event planning.

After you read that did you look at your desk? Can you even see your desk under all the rubble? The Wall Street Journal reports that the average U.S. executive wastes six weeks annually searching for important documents lost in clutter.

Don't feel bad, my desk looks terrible too sometimes. *'I enter with no judgment, I leave with no stories.'* is Schmalenberger's tagline, *'It is hard to ask for help, but I realize that and I want people to realize that I respect them for asking for help.'*

***I Did it** works to create a sustainable organized home or office. 'I work together with the client to create the organized and relaxing home or business that they have been dreaming of.'*

How did you become an organizational guru?

Schmalenberger: I have developed organizing habits over time as well as read and studied about the topic at length. Organizing is much more complex than people just being messy so I am always researching new methods.

I am a lawyer by profession and I like order and structure by nature. When I decided to make a career change I asked my friends what I was good at, and that was organizing. Give me a task and I can get it done for you with relative ease.

Being a mother of 3 busy boys I had to be organized or I would lose my mind. Being a mom has taught me so much I call those 16 years of on the job training. Each of my kids is so different and I needed to adapt to them, just like I have to adapt to my client's learning and organizing styles. For example if I am working in a client's office who is a creative person who loves color, we find pretty baskets and decorative file folders to organize that space. For a client who is more a left brain thinker, we may take one color of file folder and put them in alphabetical order or numerical order.

When someone contacts you for help, what happens?

Schmalenberger: I usually book my clients in three hour sessions. We take a tour of the problem areas and I listen to my client. That is a key part of my job. I listen for clues that will help me put together their kitchen, office, bedroom, family room, etc. We can usually tackle one room in three hours. There may be some homework for the client to do, such as a spouse may have a box to sort into shred, trash or file.



I need to figure out how their family functions. I look at daily habits and try to work with those habits. For example, where does the person put the mail every day? We then put a basket in that spot to collect the mail, so it looks organized and not cluttered.

It usually works best if there are not distractions such as kids and pets... sometimes even the spouse shouldn't be there.

Have you worked with people who need professional psychological help as well, including hoarders?

Schmalenberger: I do not work with hoarders as that is a specialty that I am not an expert in. The organizer who works with hoarders should have training that

includes many hours of coursework and study. Organizing hoarders must involve working in a partnership with mental health providers. Often it is a health risk to enter their home due to mold, dust and pet dander. If you have a hoarding situation I would caution you against hiring any organizer that would take the job. Do your research before hiring.

However most of the people that ask me for help are at their wits end with getting organized and think they are hoarders, when in reality, they are not. What they find through the process is that we have fun and they learn about why they are disorganized. So many of my clients have tried for years to be organized and have been feeling bad about themselves for not being able to figure out how to get organized for good. I reassure them and we do some out of the box thinking. It is always a good idea to get fresh eyes on a project.

Before signing off, what is a small piece of advice for people to take away with them today?

Schmalenberger: Set a timer for 15 minutes and organize until the timer goes off. Don't leave the room during this time, just set the objects that belong elsewhere in the doorway of the room you are working in. Do this once a day for a week, and see how much you can get done.

I've set my timer and my desk is my focus. I realize it isn't a room, but sometimes you have to start small and work your way up.

You can find [I Did it with MS. Simplicity on the web](#), on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#). You can also [email Schmalenberger](#) for more information or to set up an appointment.

Join my group on Facebook or you can follow me on Twitter!



Schmalenberger shared some startling statistics about how disorganization directly and indirectly impacts society financially.

- *The Small Business Administration (SBA) estimates that 80 percent of filed papers are never looked at again.*
- *The National Soap and Detergent Association believes getting rid of clutter would eliminate 40 percent of the housework in the average home.*
- *Harris Interactive reports that 23% of adults say they pay bills late (and incur fees) because they lose them.*
- *The Self Storage Association estimates that there are almost 40,000 self-storage facilities in the United States, and the demand for them doubled from 1994 to 2004.*
- *The U.S. Department of Energy reports that 25 percent of people with two-car garages don't park any cars in their garages, and 32 percent only have room for one.*
- *Each year, about 100 million households receive 16.6 billion catalogs.- Direct Mail Association*
- *The National Soap and Detergent Association says 80 percent of household clutter is the result of disorganization, not lack of space.*
- *According to a study conducted by a Boston marketing firm, the average American burns 55 minutes a day looking for things they know they own but cannot find.*
- *65 percent of people describe themselves as 'very' or 'insanely' busy according to a Day Runner Survey.*

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