

# Faculty Development

## Career Tools

### [Faculty Development](#)

### [On Being an Oncologist](#)

### [Future Programs](#)

### [Career Tools](#)

### [Grants & Writing](#)

### [Contact Information](#)

### Getting Organized

An e-newsletter of organizing tips for faculty members. July/August 2005.

In this issue:

[When to Call in the Troops](#) // [Professional Organizer](#) // [Virtual Assistant](#) // [Personal Trainer](#) // [Executive, Career or Life Coach](#) // [Housekeepers](#) // [Advice on Hiring Someone](#) // [Cool Gadgets](#) // [Websites](#) // [Products](#) // [From the Bookshelf](#) // [Got Clutter?](#)

*"The first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: Decide what you want."*

--Ben Stein

→ Note: Pages will open in a new browser window. M. D. Anderson does not endorse external sites.

### When to Call in the Troops

At a recent organizing presentation I gave, the questions turned to organizing at home. A woman in the audience raised her hand and said, "I feel like I can't do anymore than I'm already doing, and things aren't getting done. Is it all right to hire a housekeeper?" She seemed almost embarrassed to ask, as if she were admitting to some sort of failure. I assured her that it was absolutely, positively fine to hire a housekeeper.

No matter how highly organized you become or how much of a Type A personality you have, it's okay to admit that you can't do everything, and I'm sure each of you know the feeling all too well. You're surrounded, drowning with the overwhelming amount of things you have or projects you want to do, but you just don't have enough time to get it all done. Then, it's time to call in reinforcements.

### Professional Organizer

Let's start with the one that's closest to my heart. It's very easy to tell when you need to hire a professional organizer: You open the door of a room, feel all the air leave your body at the thought of tackling the clutter, and just close the door, leaving it "for another day." Or maybe you've been watching the TV shows *Clean Sweep* or *Mission: Organization* and dream of your own organizing SWAT team coming to the rescue.

Organizers also can help empty nesters or retirees downsize. Other services can include: preparing for a move; unpacking; and assisting family members deal with an estate of a loved one. These kinds of events are highly emotional and stressful, and organizers are objective and help you make hard choices.

To hire a professional organizer in Houston, visit the [National Association of Professional Organizers \(NAPO\) -- Houston Chapter](#). In other parts of the country, check out the [NAPO](#) main site. In Houston, prices average about \$50 an hour. Outside Houston, prices vary according to region.

### Too Tired to Hire?

Check out *Organizing from the Inside Out* by Julie Morgenstern or *Organizing Plain and Simple* by Donna Smallin.

[Back to Top](#)

### Virtual Assistant

Cosmetics guru Mary Kay used to say, "The problem with women is that they don't have a good wife to come home too." A virtual assistant could be the answer. According to local Virtual Assistant [Marla Regan](#), a VA can help you:

- Pay bills or send correspondence
- Place orders
- Make travel arrangements
- Send out invitations, holiday cards, or other large mailings
- Remind you of important dates
- Build and/or maintain a database for you
- Do any other task an administrative assistant can do

VA's can be very helpful to small business owners and entrepreneurs who may not have the money or space for a full-time administrative position. In Houston, the average cost is \$20 per hour. You can hire a VA for a one-time event or have them on retainer for a certain number of hours per week. The [International Association of Virtual Assistants](#) has a worldwide directory of VA's.

#### Too Tired to Hire?

Since you already are doing everything yourself, there are not many other resources for you. Use online bill pay, dump your to-do list on paper, and check out *Getting Things Done* by David Allen.

[Back to Top](#)

### Personal Trainer

Whether you want to change your workout routine or get a routine, a personal trainer will push you much further than you would push yourself. You can use a trainer for a couple of sessions to get you started on a new routine or for much longer periods of time.

Most gyms have trainers on site. If not, ask for referrals. Prices vary depending on whether the trainer is part of a gym or works freelance. The average cost is \$40 to \$75 per hour.

#### Too Tired to Hire?

Check out *Fitness for Dummies*.

[Back to Top](#)

### Executive, Career or Life Coach

Executive and career coaches have been around in the workplace for a long time, and they have helped people manage their current jobs or find a new career. Relatively new on the block, life coaches can guide you through a transitional period you're experiencing or a life change you would like to make, such as retirement. Most of the sessions are conducted on the phone or via e-mail.

Faculty looking for an executive coach can call us in Faculty Development. For non-faculty and those looking for career and executive coaching, try [CoachInc.com](#). For life coaching, check out [The Coach Connection \(TCC\)](#). Fees vary according to the type of service and coaching.

#### Too Tired to Hire?

Check out *Finding Your Own North Star* by Martha Beck; *The 8th Habit or First Things First* by Stephen Covey; or *What Color Is Your Parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles and Mark Emery Bolles.

[Back to Top](#)

### Housekeepers

Referrals are the best way to find someone, or you could go with a commercial cleaning company, such as Merry Maids. This could be a one-time, clean up before a special event or a regularly, scheduled service for you.

Prices vary according to the size of your home. Don't clean the house before the housekeeper comes. There's nothing you have that they haven't seen before.

#### Too Tired to Hire?

The [FlyLady](#) features cleaning tips on her website, or check out any of Linda Cobb's *Queen of Clean* books.

### Advice on Hiring Someone

Ask around for referrals from people whose opinion you trust. Before investing in any type of service, ask for references and prices up front. If the person doesn't wind up being a good fit for you, move on to someone else. You should be comfortable with the person you're working with, or it's going to cost you even more energy and time.

[Back to Top](#)

### Cool Gadgets

*On Air*, Air Canada's e-zine for people on the go, features a few new [gadgets](#) to make your travels a bit smoother and more fun. The items include:

- [Canary Wireless Digital Hotspotter](#) so you can find those wireless hotspots for your laptop or PDA
- [Fossil Wrist Net Smart Watch](#) which automatically downloads the new time and local weather for whatever time zone you're in
- [Kensington Travel Plug Adapter](#) with four different sockets and retractable prongs for whatever country you're visiting
- [Samsung Yepp YH-820](#) which holds 1,200 music files and your favorite photos
- [Targus Ladies Cases](#) designed for the woman who wants an attractive notebook bag

### Cool Websites

- [Check out SeatGuru](#), a website devoted to helping travelers pick the best airline seats → The [website](#) features color-coded diagrams of different airlines and their planes and shows which seats are the best and which ones should be avoided. The site is very easy to use. (The Organized Executive)
- [Love to read newspapers](#) but don't have the time? → Sign up on [Slate Magazine](#) for their round up of five daily newspapers, which include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal*. At the bottom of page, click on "Newsletters" and sign in. Select "Today's Papers." (The Organized Executive)

### Cool Products

- [Ikea's Sonne storage unit](#) → The [unit](#) has storage space on all four sides with drawers for pens, paper, and supplies; an adjustable shelf; a rail and hooks; and a magazine file. The Sonne is on casters, making it great for small spaces and even smaller dorm rooms, and it comes in white or green. Assembly is required.

- **Hold Everything's Book-Cloth Collections** features several long-term storage boxes  
→ All the boxes are lined with acid-free paper to prevent objects from yellowing or sticking. Also, [Book-Cloth Collections](#) come in a variety of colors, depending on your decorating tastes, and can be nicely stacked on a shelf. My favorites are the three-drawer organizer and the large art box.

The three-drawer organizer is great for keeping those letters and other collectibles, and the art box is perfect for storing away children's artwork, larger photos, and other items. The collection also features a desktop organizer, magazine holders, a 4-drawer organizer, and art and media boxes.

[Back to Top](#)

### From the Bookshelf

*Saving Stuff: How to Care for and Preserve Your Collectibles, Heirlooms, and Other Prized Possessions* by Don Williams and Louisa Jaggar

This [guide](#) is a resource on how to preserve those family treasures, antiques and everything in between. Williams is a Smithsonian senior conservator, and Jaggar considers herself an amateur collector who confesses to messing up items in her own collection. The duo offer up advice on how to preserve your child's macaroni artwork, vintage photos and books, and the family silver. They even tell you how to repair and recondition your antiques using household items.

### Got Clutter?

I have developed 15-minute, 30-minute and 45-minute presentations on organizing and time management. Moving to a new building? I also have a 15-minute presentation on preparing for a move for your department.

I also do one-on-one sessions in your office and help you come up with a solution. To schedule a presentation or a one-on-one appointment, call (713) 792-8061 or e-mail [Janice Simon](mailto:jsimon@mdanderson.org) (jsimon@mdanderson.org).

*Happy Organizing!*

-- Janice

[Back to Top](#)

[Back to Previous Issues](#)

[Back to Career Tools](#)

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