

Cynthia
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How To Be An Awesome Clutter Free Coach



Departing from my usual marketing how-to tips, this post shares best practices for going clutter free from Janet Fishman, an organizing expert. You'll find an explanation of why becoming clutter free is important to women coaches and business owners, how to know when it's time you got organized, and valuable suggestions for your home office and your business.

With all of us women consultants, experts, speakers, and coaches now working from home, Janet and I decided this blog post interview for how to become clutter free in your business was spot on. While we're in mandated social-distancing mode, I'm thrilled that we can share this timely resource with you.

Imagine how focused and creative you'll feel when those organizing projects lurking in your home office are buttoned up. Once you're clutter free, your marketing content creation juices will flow, and you'll whip up delightful blogs, articles, podcasts and more delish creations for your dream clients, won't you?

[Imagine how focused and creative you'll feel about marketing your business, when those organizing projects lurking in your home office are buttoned up.](#)

Let's dive in. Enjoy!

Cynthia Trevino/SheMarketsMentor: I recently had the opportunity to interview Janet Fishman, J.D., C.P.D.S., CEO & President of HOPE Organizers, Inc. Janet has boatloads of best practices and timely tidbits that can impact how you organize your business. Happily, then you can easily make 'space' for your marketing content creation genius to flow.

Janet Fishman/Hope Organizers, Inc.: Thank you, Cynthia, for this interview. I'm very honored to speak to your marketing community. There is such a connection between being organized and marketing a business that I hope your readers garner helpful information from this interview.

Steps for Getting Unstuck

Question: I often coach women who feel stuck in progressing their businesses, especially with regards to organization. As coaches, what can we say to our women business owner clients to help them get 'unstuck' and on the road to being clutter free?

Answer: Often times, the clutter that is in one's workspace, computer (digital clutter), or home space, blocks creativity and productivity. Unbeknownst to many women, clutter shuts down creativity and impairs our ability to go in new directions. That said, focusing on being clutter free is often the first step to initiating a growth spurt in your business!

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For me, if I want to work on a project and my desk is covered with papers and mail that arrived that day, I HAVE to handle those papers and clear off my desk before I can start on that project....regardless of the late hour. The pile irritates me and gives me the hebe-gebes and I

can't concentrate clearly. Because I'm an organizer, I can clear that pile quickly. I deal with my mail daily, so it doesn't take me long to tidy up my desk.

However, someone who's disorganized (either situationally or chronically or who even has hoarding tendencies) may not be able to clear their desk. Sadly, the piles grow and grow until they become such an irritant they interfere with your business creativity.

What I tell my clients in this situation is:

- 1) Let's first identify what you are good at, i.e. are you an artist, a writer, a business or life coach, an attorney, etc.
- 2) Once identified, I tell my clients that that arena is exactly where they should focus because that is the revenue-producing action.
- 3) Then, they should delegate everything else.

The truth is, many people have heard their whole lives negative remarks, such as "You're a slob", "Your room is a pig sty", "You're a mess" and they carry that negative stigma and identify themselves through those labels.

I remind my clients that they're highly intelligent and/or creative to be doing the business they're doing. Next, they must stop the negative talk, realize where their talents lie, stay in that positive recognition, and delegate the areas that are not their 'zone of genius'.

Yes, it costs to have an organizer, or bookkeeper or accountant, but so does going to a therapist or doctor to deal with anxiety and stress, right? Organizing is a necessity for some women, not a luxury.



Janet Fishman, J.D., C.P.D.S., CEO & President of Hope Organizers, Inc.

Question: What are the most common questions you hear from women business owners who bring you in to help reduce clutter, especially those working from home?

Answer: I hear different types of questions. Here are a few: “I’m...

- stressed, overwhelmed
- completely disorganized
- feeling hopeless
- incurring late fees because I can’t find the bills to pay
- not following up on leads because I can’t find the business cards or notes

“Yikes! What do I do?”

- “What happens if I died tomorrow? Nothing is in order for my family or executor to find.”
- “How do I keep my business papers separate from my personal ones, especially with my children dumping all their schoolwork in my home office?”
- “I have to share my home office with my spouse. I’m fairly neat, but my spouse’s side is a mess and it bothers me.”

“What do I do?”

Question: Wow, that’s a ton of baggage. And, on top of raising a family, running a business, keeping up with client work, you name it. What can women do to become clutter free if they don’t have a designated place to work inside the home, for example?

Answer: It depends if they have children occupying rooms or not. There’s always a corner of a dining room, kitchen, bedroom or even a corner in a studio apartment that we can arrange as a workspace. Even a tool shed, or garage can work, depending on the business.

I’ve helped clients even set up a rolling workspace whereby they worked at a dining table and rolled the file cabinet that contained files and supplies back to a closet when it was dinner time and the family returned home. Then, they rolled it out the next morning after the spouse and children had left for the day.

Question: Many creatives, course creators, coaches, and solopreneurs resist setting up ‘systems’. How do business owners know when they’ve grown enough that they need systems to organize and expand their businesses?

Answer: Well, I recommend laying the proper foundation with regards to organizing the business in the same way as commencing the business so that all aspects are in place.

For example, did the business owner set up the proper legal entity for the business and get an EIN number; did they get a dba if needed; did they get requisite insurances; do they have employees and set up payroll systems, know the legalities with regards to hiring, vacation, benefits?

Does she have a bookkeeper to handle accounts payable, receivables, and quarterly taxes for the business?

If she has employees, did she write an employee handbook and operations manual?

All of these actions are the organization's foundation and while a woman may be wearing all the hats for a while, certain aspects must be done properly.

I have a client, let's call her 'Stella', who started baking at home for people and turned the hobby into a business. I asked her if she got a cottage license and insurance in the event someone got sick from her food. Stella had no clue what to do, so I organized these foundational items for her while she continued to bake her delicious foods.

If you've been in business awhile and realize your filing systems for receipts and taxes and important documents are out-of-date or missing and if you're forgetting to pay bills and are late to get documents to your CPA, then this would be a good time for you to get organized.

Question: How do we evaluate whether or not it's time to declutter our work and living spaces? What questions should women ask themselves if they feel overwhelmed in their businesses? When both client work and content creation aren't flowing the way they did before?

Answer: The reality is, we have a tendency to visually tune out things we see every day. The psychology behind this is called 'adaptation', whereby our brains cancel out the constants in our lives and "adapt" to what is there and don't notice it.

Why You Can't Rely on Post-it Notes

For example, if you put a post-it reminder note on the bathroom mirror, the first day it reminds us. But if the paper stays there, it becomes a constant and we tune it out. This is what happens with clutter.

A woman comes home with a tote bag of brochures, handouts, promo items from a conference. She sets the tote bag down next to her desk. After a few weeks, she doesn't notice it anymore. At this point, when she doesn't take the materials out of the tote bag and it stays there for months, it now has become clutter. Our house or office gets filled up with stuff and soon we don't see it at all.

How do you know you have reached this point? Often your body's or mind's physical reaction will signal you. If you start feeling anxious, stressed, overwhelmed, hopeless, helpless, embarrassed to have family, friends, or clients come over, then you've reached the point of needing organizing. Alternatively, you can ask a friend to come over and give their opinion.

I've had people tell me that when they went to a CPA's or an attorney's office, and it was cluttered and the desk was piled high with files and papers, they didn't return because they were concerned the CPA or attorney would lose their papers or get them mixed up with another client.

In your business,

- If you're failing to pay your bills on time and are getting late fees repeatedly, it is time to organize.
- Are your client files piled on your desk and you can't retrieve an estimate you gave them? It's time to organize.
- If you're missing deadlines, it's time to organize.
- If your mail's piled up, it's time to organize.
- Not following up on leads because you have so many other things to do? It's time to organize.
- If you realize your receipts for taxes are shoved in envelopes and plastic bags, instead of arranged in categorized file folders, it's time to organize.
- When you find your energy level remains low and you're not sick, and your mood is to procrastinate on everything, and you're feeling out-of-control, then the clutter has sapped your energy and it's time to organize.
- If you can't concentrate, have lost your creativity, and aren't feeling inspired, it's time to organize.
- Noticing that your productivity level has decreased for no reason? It's time to organize.

[Does it seem your breathing is hampered, and you don't have peace of mind sitting at your desk? It's time to organize.](#)

Here's the big one, if you walk into your office or home space, and you want to turn around and exit, it is without a doubt, time to organize.

And, the list goes on.....



To Shred, or Not to Shred

Question: Here's a big question I struggle with: How do you recommend when to keep and when to shred business documents?

Answer: There are many state and federal regulations regarding employment documents, patient records, business records, etc. with different time frames. I would need more specifics before

suggesting someone shred documents. On a personal level, I often see people shredding their deceased parents' important documents and I cringe because there are several reasons you may need to retain these. For one, closing out an estate and the related tax return. For two, there could be unclaimed property for which old documents could help recover that money.

Question: Clearly, it all boils down to making informed choices—what to keep, what to shred, what to store on our computers. To reduce paper in our businesses and home offices, what documents can we organize digitally?

Answer: Again, this depends on what the documents are, how you use them currently, how you will use ones archived, what type of business you have, do you sell products and do inventory online, do you have OSR (Optical Search Recognition) to search documents, etc. This would be another area that I would need to know more about. However, I will relate several stories that I have encountered with clients and my recommendations.

Preserving Your Family Heritage—the Right Way

Many people spend a lot of money and time scanning documents that they could soon dump so why bother at all, such as utility bills, unless they are needed for tax backup. It can be a good idea to scan receipts that are needed for taxes as the thermal print does fade from receipts.

I have seen people throw out 100-year old photos because they say they scanned the photo. This really upsets me because it is not just the image that is historical, but also the paper, the smell, the feel, the chemical processing, the film type it was developed from, the camera that was used, etc. There is no guarantee that the technology will last. I have seen many flash drives, floppies, CDs, and hard drives go bad. I have seen cloud storage websites go out-of-business.

Then, you lose your family heritage. And, why not mail that 100-year old photo to a relative so they can preserve it for another 100 years?

Another situation I see often—people get their bank statements online but don't review them or do anything with them. The statements remain there for only a certain amount of time before sections disappear, such as viewing checks. If your account is comprised and you change the bank account number, all disappears on the old account number.

What people need to do, is make a PDF of the statement and store it in a file on their computers. Same thing with paystubs from a job. If one loses their job, they lose all their paystubs which they may need for taxes and to verify social security has accurate records on their income.

Yes, Your Social Media Must be Organized

Question: How do we stay clutter free on our computers, with all the social media profiles and digital files that we need to maintain as business owners?

Answer: The same way you would if you had a file cabinet. You make folders and subfolders in your email or other storage sites and label them to either match the free-standing file cabinet or label them to be the online files. For example, have a file in email that says: **BANKING** in capital letters. Then have subfolders under that whereby, in regular type, you list your banks. Then account numbers, then years for the statements for that year. Here is how it would look:

BANK

Bank of America
 x1234
 2020
 2019
Chase
 x0349
 2020
 2019
Wells Fargo
 x3935
 2020
 2019

Do this for everything: credit cards, insurances, utilities. Group like-with-like. Have a folder called **SOCIAL MEDIA** and then have subfolders for each Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc. underneath. Here is how that would look:

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook

- Passwords
- Photos-Headshot
- Photos-Product Pictures
- Profiles

Instagram

- Passwords
- Photos-Headshot
- Photos-Product Pictures
- Profiles

One thing that's very important to understand:

Don't be forced into digitizing, scanning, and running your business all electronically if you're not comfortable with that. Society and advertising have convinced people that they can't perform nor run businesses if they don't do social media or accept payments by Paypal or Venmo. This is

the furthest from the truth so don't be persuaded to take your business virtually if you don't want to.

Cynthia/SheMarketsMentor: Another option: you can ask clients, who use online payment apps, if their bank offers Bill Pay. That way, clients can pay you without having to touch paper and you don't have to accept payments via PayPal, etc. With Bill Pay, a paper check arrives in your postal mailbox, and your client doesn't have to write a check. I use it and love its convenience.

Your Payoffs for Being Clutter Free

Question: What are the biggest benefits women coaches, consultants, therapists, lawyers, healers, and creatives talk about after working with you to become clutter free in their lives and business?

Answer: The major benefits of becoming clutter free are more energy, empowerment, clarity, freedom, productivity, creativity, and inspiration. Additionally, you'll experience less stress, elimination of feelings of overwhelm, peace of mind, and many more.

During my work, I really inspire people. I have had bedridden clients, who, when they started to see the clearing of the space, got up and participated.

I have been called a healer, a miracle worker, a godsend, a savior, and a paper tamer.

One client told me she made more money in her business the month we cleared out the clutter in her home. Since there are testimonials on my website, I will highlight only a few here:

“Janet, I woke up this morning feeling so much lighter, inspired, and happy about my paper and files being organized. It has given me energy to move forward with doing my taxes. I look forward to doing even more organizing. Thank you for helping me bring my life back in order.” - Beth J., Business Owner, Marina Del Rey

“As an attorney, I have used Janet to organize my home office and create systems to manage my mail and calls. She is great because she helps me work efficiently and move my projects and proposals along. She also helped me organize many successful seminars and training programs when I taught legal research to law students.” -C. Elizabeth F., Esq., Attorney-at-Law

“Janet organized my personal office. Since getting her help, my office has been easier to navigate, and my workflow more efficient. Thanks SO much for your help.” -Michele H., psychotherapist, Los Angeles

Final Thoughts

Whew, we covered a lot of clutter issues. Thanks, so much Janet, for sharing a wealth of information and inspiration to help us become clutter free coaches!

Here are 3 key takeaways for how to be an awesome clutter free coach:

Takeaway #1: Becoming clutter free gives you a ton of payoffs, including getting back into the creative flow so you can resume marketing and content creation with ease.

Takeaway #2: Asking yourself key questions about missing deadlines, not following up on leads and more, tells you if it's time to launch a clutter free campaign for your business.

Takeaway #3: You'll flourish after properly organizing all aspects of your business and life from documentation to family photos to social media assets, and client business cards and notes leads.

About Janet Fishman

Janet Fishman, J.D., C.P.D.S., is a member of NAPO (the National Association of Productivity & Organizing Professionals), AADMM (the American Association of Daily Money Managers), ICD (Institute for Challenging Disorganization), and APPO (Association of Personal Photo Organizers). Janet can be reached at www.hopeorganizers.com or janet@hopeorganizers.com.

About Cynthia Trevino

Cynthia is a marketing coach for women business owners, the author of Amazon #1 bestselling [*She Markets, A Guide for Women Entrepreneurs*](#), and creator of She Markets Mentor blog.

This free (and highly detailed) cheat sheet gives you 5 simple step-by-step strategies to help you create content that captivates your dream clients. <https://shemarketsmentor.mykajabi.com/ideal-client-5>

[Cynthia Trevino](#)

Cynthia Trevino is the creator of She Markets Mentor blog and website. She won't stand for purpose driven women entrepreneurs not being heard. Since becoming instantly self-employed after a giant downsizing in 2001, she's coached + trained owners who want to grow their businesses with dream clients. Cynthia's the author + publisher of Amazon #1 Bestseller, *She Markets: A Guide for Women Entrepreneurs*. She and her husband live in Carlsbad, CA with Bentley, their playful Shih Tzu puppy.

Cynthia's Book



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