

## Get organized

New book offers tips and tools to develop and maintain a more organized space

Take a good look at your desk at home or at work. Do you have things compartmentalized or is it looking pretty unorganized? Either way, Kelly

Lynn Anders believes everyone has a particular organization style that impacts how we view our things, live with them, and keep them organized or disorganized.

In her new book, *The Organized Lawyer*, Anders says that anyone is capable of becoming organized, provided the right equipment is used.

Anders, who is an associate dean for Student Affairs at Washburn University School of Law, also works with attorneys and students to sharpen their time management, business etiquette and organization skills.

Here she provides an excerpt from her new book.

There's more than one way to be organized, but you wouldn't know it from most books and television shows. There's so much more to creating and maintaining an organized space than purchasing a bunch of plastic bins and attractive containers from the local office supply store. Add stress and time constraints and multiple types of items to control and it's a recipe for failure — or a belief that organization is impossible.

It all starts in law school — or possibly before. We all remember first year. So much information to process, and a new language to learn. The average textbooks in law school must be sold by the pound because they are so heavy as they are expensive. So, information overload begins the day you set foot through the door of your law school, and feeling lost and helpless in managing that information is just as immediate.

While the amount of information continues to increase, the amount of space we have to work with has decreased. In many workplaces, offices are smaller, cubicles are the norm, and, like other professions, the legal profession lacks the stability it used to enjoy. So, not only is there more information to manage, but there's less space in which to do it, and because of job movement, that information is passed on in various forms of disarray from one person to the next. How does one prioritize with all of these competing interests



and maintains a workspace that inspires confidence from clients who depend on us and colleagues we are either trying to impress or by whom we at least want to appear capable, reliable, and on top of our game?

Sadly, many of us are dropping the ball. On a regular basis, attorneys are sanctioned for many misdeeds that can be traced back to disorganization. Examples include compromising of funds, failure to produce records to opposing counsel, failure to file in a timely manner, being inaccessible to clients, and seeming ill prepared to represent clients during hearings. Just the thought of all of the responsibilities attorneys need to handle can be overwhelming. How does one do so and remain organized?

No one expects to see a space that is entirely clutter-free, but most people feel more comfortable in an office that offers a clean chair, small space to lean or set down personal items, and surroundings that demonstrate control over one's workload. When a client comes to you for help, he or she wants to feel like you can handle it. How can they be expected to trust you with life-changing decisions when you don't appear to have control of your own affairs? That may sound harsh, but perceptions matter—especially in the legal profession.

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