

It's the slob patrol

By Mina Hochberg
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It's Ann Sullivan's job to bring order to your life, literally.

Sullivan, 41, is a professional organizer who helps people manage their lives by streamlining their homes. She operates on a trickle-down theory that disorganized environments invariably breed chaotic lifestyles.

For example, a messy bedroom may disrupt your sleep patterns. Or you might spend too much money eating out simply because your kitchen's too cluttered to cook in.

When Sullivan first meets with clients, they discuss goals, such as wanting more time to spend with loved ones or learning to cope with a multi-tasking schedule.

Then they isolate the areas in the home where messiness prevents the client from meeting the goals. Together,

they sort through all the items in the room.

"We inventory what they have and make decisions on how to let go of things," she said. "Do I love this? Have I worn it? Do I use it?" They decide what to keep, donate, chuck or move to another room. Undecided items are put in a box and marked with a date a year away. If the client never opens the box during the year, it's tossed.

"It's really about being conscious about what you own," Sullivan says. "Having a lot of clutter around really clogs up your mind."

Sullivan started her business five years ago after leaving a stable job as an investigator with the court system.

While still working her full-time job, she spent months researching new careers. After going on many informational interviews, she finally picked organizing because it capitalized on her skills as a



Sullivan helps clients prevent their desk from looking like this.

resourceful person.

For 1.5 years, she worked for friends and relied on word of mouth to get jobs. Finally, with a startup fund of \$5,000 she'd saved, she launched her business.

For Sullivan, the leap from employed to self-employed was a readily met challenge.

"It's important to have structure," she says. "People go into their own business for

flexibility, but it's important to keep structured days, like getting up at the same time every morning."

One of the most telling tales from Sullivan's career hunt concerns a job counselor who told her she lacked marketable skills and that she should stick with her job in the court system.

Five years later, her organizing business is thriving.