



Service Story

Hiring a Professional Organizer

by **AMANDA BELL**

After getting married, **Rachael Levy** needed help incorporating her belongings into the Marina del Rey, Calif., home of her new husband, Jonathan. “It’s a nice size, but has almost no storage,” she says. With relatives coming to visit soon, they needed the house to be functional fast. Rachael tried to work with two other organizing consultants without success before hiring Olwen Turtle, owner of Los Angeles-based **A Good Sort**. Turtle came to Rachael’s rescue, guiding her in organizing the home office, kitchen, bathroom, master closet and guest bedroom of the 1,800-square-foot home. Rachael, who paid \$1,200 for the job, shares the story of working with Turtle below.



THE BACKSTORY

Merging Two Households

Jonathan already owned a great home, but it was that classic scenario where I needed to weed out the duplication. He's also a minimalist, so it was a challenge to merge our stuff into one household. I have a collection of teacups, books, birthday cards and gift wrap, but when I moved in I had no accessible storage. All my things just sat in boxes while I scratched my head.

On top of that, every summer I take a niece or a nephew to stay with me. But my husband said, "no child can sleep in that earthquake horror of a room full of boxes" that was our guest room, so we had a deadline of three weeks to clear it out. I knew I could do it on my own, but there was no way I'd hit on the right solution the first time.

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THE EXPERIENCE

Purging, Sorting and Optimizing

At first I didn't see how we could get it all done. There were parts where I felt like we were talking half the time, and it wasn't necessarily coming together. But Olwen was right, I needed to know what my goal was before I dove in.

She gave me homework of sorting piles into what I wanted to purge and keep the week before she came and shopping for a few containers to move forward after the first day of working with her. I managed to get rid of the "I might need that someday" piles and purged 40 percent of what I moved in with.

When she came the second day, all the sudden it was boom, boom, boom. Things started going where they needed to go. There was even a point where I needed to leave to run errands. She was still able to do a lot without me because we had already discussed my intention for each space. In two days we touched every room in the house, whether it was redoing it or optimizing what was there.

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LESSONS LEARNED

Making Things Accessible

Olwen understood what I needed from certain spaces. I had all this stuff that I couldn't get to, so I didn't use it. The strategy we talked about was that I needed to see it, grab it and go. Everything that couldn't be given a home, I didn't want in my house.

I'm a technical project manager, so I'm used to organizing things on a more abstract level. I knew it could be done, but I just wasn't sure how to do it and had no desire. Projects like this can be consuming, frustrating and emotional. You want to do this with a professional because it takes so much stress off you and you'll do it right the first time. If you can hire one, you should. The sooner you can get back to your real job, which is living, the better.

Photos by Sara Cozolino

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