



Getting Started as a Professional Organizer or Productivity Consultant

Are you curious about how to get started as a Professional Organizer or Productivity Consultant?

NAPO, the National Association of Professional Organizers, is a non-profit membership association which focuses on providing members with education, professional development, networking opportunities, and a community of collaborative colleagues. We understand that sometimes it's hard to know where to begin, and we want to help get you started.

Who are NAPO's members?

The National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO) is a group of approximately 4,000 Professional Organizers and Productivity Consultants dedicated to helping individuals and businesses attain order and efficiency. Our mission is to be the leading source for organizing and productivity professionals by providing exceptional education, enhancing business connections, advancing industry research, and increasing public awareness.

In addition to serving members, we want to reach consumers and those interested in becoming professional organizers and productivity consultants. We offer programs, information, and guidance for each of these groups. NAPO members include solopreneurs, employers, subcontractors, students, academics, bloggers, and representatives from corporations who offer an organizing/productivity product or service. The diversity of our membership allows members to learn from each other.

Members are:

- Full-time, part-time, and those with other jobs and/or commitments
- Various ages, genders, educational backgrounds, and work backgrounds
- Specialists in numerous areas including residential organizing, business organizing, personal productivity, business productivity, coaching, support of clients with chronic disorganization and hoarding disorders, writing, speaking, and environmentally conscious organizing
- People just like YOU!

When you join NAPO, you become part of a community of organizing and productivity professionals who, at one point, made the leap into the professional organizing industry. NAPO provides members of all backgrounds and experiences the opportunity to learn and develop, with members supporting each other along the learning curve.

NAPO University

NAPO offers excellent educational opportunities to help Professional Organizers deliver quality service and succeed in business. The foundation of NAPO University is the Professional Organizer Curriculum. This curriculum includes courses developed by the NAPO Education Committee and taught by NAPO members who are experts in their subspecialties and who meet the qualifications set by the Education Committee. NAPO University is open to the public.

Members join as Provisional Members. NAPO encourages advancement to Professional Member status, enabling your name to be listed in the Find Your Local NAPO Organizer Directory and granting the opportunity to join NAPO's Special Interest Groups (SIGs).

In order to achieve Professional Member status, NAPO requires completion of the Professional Practices Coursework (PPC). These courses are designed to establish a foundation of knowledge of professional practices for organizers and productivity professionals. The three courses include:

- Fundamental Organizing and Productivity Principles
- Fundamental Organizing and Productivity Skills
- Ethics for Professional Organizers and Productivity Specialists

Some members join and complete the prerecorded On Demand courses in less than a month, while others complete the coursework over an extended period of time. Others complete the courses in the live webinar format, which allows them to interact with the course presenter in real time.

Once you have completed the PPC, you will be upgraded to Professional status without further action and with no additional fees. When you renew your membership, you will renew as a Professional Member, at the Professional Member rate.

NAPO proudly offers select NAPO University courses On Demand, so you can purchase pre-recorded webinars and watch online at your convenience. You can start and stop the On Demand courses, as necessary, to fit into your busy schedule. Additional courses from NAPO's Professional Organizer Curriculum and session recordings from past annual conferences are continuously being added to the On Demand site, giving students unprecedented access to NAPO University's catalog.

What if you are not sure if you want to become a professional organizer?

NAPO University offers Level 1 courses (i.e., 100, 101, etc.) for those considering whether our profession is right for them. To get started, we recommend the following courses. Registration for these courses can be done at NAPO.net:

- PO-001W Introduction to Professional Organizing
- PO-104W Starting an Organizing Business

These two courses will give you an idea of what it takes to be a professional organizer. If, after taking these courses, you feel that pursuing a career as an organizing or productivity professional is a good fit for you, follow up with the other courses in the 100 level series (Fundamental Organizing Principles *and* Starting Out as a Residential Organizer).

Suggested Reading

- *Organizing From The Inside Out* by Julie Morgenstern
- *Getting Things Done* by David Allen
- *The Organized Student* by Donna Goldberg
- *Conquering Chronic Disorganization* by Judith Kolberg
- *Organizing Plain and Simple* by Donna Smallin
- *How To Start A Home-Based Professional Organizing Business* by Dawn Noble

This is by no means an exclusive list – it's a taste of what's out there. The BCPO® (The Board of Certification for Professional Organizers) has a more thorough list on their website.

Commonly Asked Questions

Q: Do I need to be a CPO® (Certified Professional Organizer®) in order to start organizing as a business?

A: No. The CPO® designation is for our most experienced professionals. In our industry, the first step to work towards is becoming a NAPO Professional Member. Meanwhile, you can get started as a Professional Organizer or Productivity Consultant by opening your business and working with clients. The CPO® designation is earned after completing 1,500 paid hours of client work which teach, transfer or demonstrate organizing skills within the last 3 years and passing the CPO® examination.

Q: Do I need to be a member of NAPO in order to start organizing as a business?

A: No, but our members tell us that by joining NAPO they are able to kick-start their businesses and are better able to navigate establishing themselves in the profession. NAPO offers extensive training and education, networking and camaraderie with other successful professional organizers, credibility to prospective clients, and opportunities for discounts from our Corporate Associate Members. NAPO is the premier association for professionals in the organizing and productivity industry.

NAPO encourages its members to join one of the 33 local chapters or the virtual chapter of NAPO. Chapter membership offers regular networking opportunities with other professional organizers, as well as educational opportunities. (Local chapters allow prospective members the chance to attend a meeting prior to joining.)

Q: What if there isn't a chapter near me?

A: NAPO has a virtual chapter for members who don't have a NAPO chapter in their area.

Q: What do I need to get started?

A: Starting a business as a Professional Organizer or Productivity Consultant is just like starting any other business. You will want to be sure you are covered legally and financially. Determine your business structure (LLC, sole proprietor, etc), obtain insurance, file the appropriate paperwork with your city/county/state, keep accurate bookkeeping records, and file your taxes properly. Treat your professional organizing and productivity business in a professional manner, just as you would any other business. **NAPO national** and **local chapter membership** is also highly recommended for support and education as you work with clients and build your business.

Q: What resources are available to help me get started in this field?

A: NAPO offers extensive education to help you. Check out our course Starting an Organizing Business. The course is designed for new and prospective Professional Organizers/Productivity Consultants. It's a blueprint for launching a successful organizing business. NAPO University gives you the foundation of knowledge on which to build your career with On Demand courses and webinars such as Starting out as a Residential Organizer and Starting Out as a Business Organizer.

Resources like our Corporate Associate Members' blogs, NAPO Get Organized Blog, and blogs of our members are great ways to learn about starting out in this field.

Once you join, you will have access to the Member Connect online community comprised of NAPO members including some of the most successful veterans in the field. You will be able to ask questions and get answers in real time. In addition we offer New Member Orientation Webinars to help you get the most out of your NAPO membership.

Many potential organizers attend our national conference and organizing expo . It's a one-of-a-kind opportunity to immerse yourself in the field, learn how to market, network within our industry, and grow your business.

Q: Do all organizing professionals do the same thing? What kinds of ways can you organize?

A: There are so many different ways Professional Organizers and Productivity Consultants help clients. Some begin by focusing on residential clients (de-cluttering and organizing closets, pantries, garages, etc.), while others work with entrepreneurs, small business owners, or corporate clients.

One decision to consider is whether you will launch your own company or join an existing organizing or productivity firm. We encourage potential organizers to leverage their own background and use this wealth of experience when considering the directions they would like to explore.

Productivity professionals and organizers do much more than sort, purge, and store. We can assist clients with home office organization, time management, corporate efficiency, specialty projects (from organizing photos to cataloging inventories), writing (whether blogs, books or lectures), virtual organizing, working with hoarding or chronically disorganized clients, downsizing, and moving and relocation --- there are virtually no limits when it comes to what you can pursue within this profession.

Q: Do professional organizers work alone or with others?

A: Some work independently, some collaborate with a team, and some use a combination of both. There are a variety of business models out there, although many organizers begin either by working as sole proprietors or for another organizer.

Q: Are there any rules or guidelines for Professional Organizers?

A: Many Organizing and Productivity Consultants are also independent business owners, and there are no specific regulations or rules specific to the organizing profession. What sets NAPO members apart is that they agree to uphold NAPO's Code of Ethics , which establishes guidelines for professional conduct with our clients and with other industry members. Beyond fundamental professional ethics, creating your own professional focus and methodology comes from training, experience, and education.

Q: Should I contact area Productivity Consultants or Organizers and ask them questions before I decide if this is for me?

A: While this is a generally collegial profession, please keep in mind that we are all business owners or employees of business owners focused on delivering results for our clients. We enjoy talking about what we do, but we're also balancing busy careers and our personal commitments. Before making a call or sending an email to a NAPO member to ask them about how they got into their profession or how they launched their businesses, research your questions online or complete a NAPO University course so that you will make the best use of your fellow professional's time and your own.

Many productivity and organizing professionals offer new business mentoring, coaching, and one-on-one training for those who are just getting started. Working with a supportive expert at the beginning of your journey in conjunction with NAPO University can certainly provide you with a springboard to success.

Q: Can I make a living working in this industry?

A: Consider this testimonial from Barry Izsak, former NAPO President and founder of Arranging It All:

“Yes, you can absolutely, positively make a very respectable living as a Professional Organizer. The beauty of this profession is that we have the flexibility to create our own path and there are so many ways to “make it.” We can choose to operate our own business or work for someone else.

Each of us also makes the decision as to how much time we can devote to this work. Obviously, a person who chooses to work part-time as a solo practitioner won’t earn as much as someone who wants and needs to work full-time and plans to build a multi-person company serving a variety of client needs.

I am aware of professional organizers who earn six figure incomes and others who make much less. The need for our services is clearly there. How much you actually earn is largely dependent on whether you are ready and able to commit the time and resources to realize your goals.”

Here is what NAPO Professional Member Nealey Stapleton of The-Organizing-Boutique.com had to say:

“The short answer is absolutely! Eight years ago, I started my business helping local clients organize their homes and offices. Now I’m transitioning to making my living online with my blog and selling information products. You can earn an income doing almost anything as long as you are willing to learn as much as you can, you know your audience, your product/service is valuable to them and you provide good customer support. Jump in with both feet and rock it!”

Q: How much money does it cost to start a professional organizing or productivity consulting business?

A: As with all businesses, costs vary. You will want to consider the type and cost of your business entity, licenses in your state, tools you will bring when working with clients, marketing, and NAPO membership, and any other professional or networking organizations. Keep a record of all these expenses for your taxes. Investing time, money, and effort in your business are important considerations of business ownership and show your commitment to your career.

Ready to join? Start here!