

Getting Started as an Organizing or Productivity Professional

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

NAPO®, the National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals™, 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 Productivity and Organizing Professionals (NAPO) is a group of approximately 4,000 organizing and productivity professionals 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 Professional Organizers and Productivity Consultants, we want to reach consumers and those interested in becoming organizing and productivity professionals. We offer programs, information, and guidance for each of these groups.

NAPO members include entrepreneurs, employees, independent contractors, 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 behavior, 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 organizing and productivity professionals deliver quality service and succeed in business. [NAPO University](#) 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 NAPO Education Committee. NAPO University is open to the public.

NAPO members join as Provisional Members. NAPO encourages advancement to Professional Member status, enabling your name to be listed in the [Find a Professional Organizer or Productivity Consultant](#) directory, and granting the opportunity to join NAPO's [Special Interest Groups](#) (SIGs) and earn [NAPO Specialist Certificates](#).

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 organizing and productivity professionals. The three courses are:

- [OD1-101 Fundamental Organizing and Productivity Principles](#)
- [OD1-102 Fundamental Organizing and Productivity Skills](#)
- [OD1-103 Ethics for Professional Organizers and Productivity Specialists](#)

Some members join and complete the pre-recorded On Demand courses in less than a month, while others complete the coursework over an extended period of time. Once you have completed the PPC, please reach out to NAPO Headquarters (HQ) and you will be upgraded to Professional Member status without further action and with no additional fees. When you renew your membership, you will renew as a Professional Member.

NAPO proudly offers select NAPO University courses in the On Demand format, 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 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 or Productivity Consultant?

NAPO University offers Level 1 courses (i.e., 001, 101, etc.) for those considering whether our profession is right for them. To get started, we recommend the following courses:

- [OD1-001 Introduction to Professional Organizing and Productivity](#)
- [OD1-104 Starting an Organizing or Productivity Business](#)

These two courses will give you an idea of what it takes to be a Professional Organizer or Productivity Consultant. 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 other courses in the 100 level series.

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, just a taste of what's out there. The [Board of Certification for Professional Organizers®](#) (BCPO®) has a more thorough list in its [handbook](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do I need to be a Certified Professional Organizer® (CPO®) 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 then passing the CPO® examination.

NAPO Professional Members are now able to earn [NAPO Specialist Certificates](#) in Residential Organizing, Workplace Productivity, and Life Transitions. These certificates are earned by completing specific NAPO University curriculum and can be a step on the path to Certification.

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 professionals, 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 our [local chapters](#) or the virtual chapter. Chapter membership offers regular networking opportunities with other Professional Organizers, as well as educational opportunities. Local chapters give 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 (Inc., 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 organizing and productivity business in a professional manner, just as you would any other business. NAPO national and local chapter membership is highly recommended for support and education as you work with clients and build your business.

NAPO encourages each business owner to seek legal counsel regarding the choice, use, and registration of his or her company's name. NAPO provides no legal guidance regarding business names and takes no position on disputes regarding business names. As part of the due diligence of doing business, NAPO encourages each member to regularly monitor the directory for business names similar to your own business name if it is trademarked.

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 or Productivity Business](#). The course is designed for new and prospective organizing and productivity professionals. It's a blueprint for launching a successful organizing business. Additional [NAPO University](#) offerings give you the foundation of knowledge on which to build your career.

Resources like our Corporate Associate Members blogs, [NAPO Get Organized Blog](#), [Stand Out](#) podcast series, 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 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 along with other free member webinars to help you get the most out of your NAPO membership. Many potential organizers attend our [annual national conference](#). 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 and productivity professionals do the same thing? What kinds of ways can you organize?

A: There are many different ways that Professional Organizers and Productivity Consultants help clients. Some focus on residential clients (decluttering and organizing closets, pantries, garages, etc.), while others work with entrepreneurs, small business owners, or corporate clients.

Organizing and productivity professionals 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, 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.

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

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 other organizers.

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

A: Many organizing and productivity professionals 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 organizing and productivity professionals in my area 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 emails to NAPO members to ask them about how they got into the 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 professionals' 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!](#)