

It's not downsizing if you're still holding onto all that stuff

A little over six years ago, I decided it would be less expensive to give my condo a facelift than it would be to move. And just like having a facelift (or so I've been told), preparation is key. In other words, it was time to clean up and clear out the clutter (yes, even a Professional Organizer should do an annual "clean sweep" to stay on top of things).

For years I've helped my clients consign, donate and/or sell their clothing, accessories, furniture and decorative fixtures, so I knew from experience what to expect when getting rid of my furnishings. In other words, I proceeded with an open mind and no grandiose expectations of making a lot of money in the process.

What I didn't expect was to sell my two leather sofas within four minutes of posting them online. Next to go was the dining room table (which, truth be told, I had never liked), along with the dining room chairs and several decorative pillows, lamps, accessories and end tables.

At the end of what became a one-day selling frenzy, I literally ended up living like a college student. My furnishings consisted of: one chair, a lone coffee table and a small flat-screen television that was balanced precariously on top of a stack of coffee table books. When it came time to purchase new furniture and accessories, I did so with a keen eye, buying only those items that I absolutely loved and absolutely needed.



Having helped innumerable clients declutter, downsize and move, I know firsthand that the task of attempting to do this on your own can be, and is, to say the very least, overwhelming. But with the help of a professional organizer/certified move manager, the job of downsizing and moving, including disposing of personal possessions, doesn't have to be stressful.

One part of decluttering and downsizing is the question of what to do with all the "stuff" you no longer need, want or use. Ideally, we'd all like to get something back for all the money we've spent, but you need to understand that you're not the only person out there who wants to recoup some of the losses.

It's time for a reality check, and here are four hints to help:

- Be it a major interior re-do, or a mini facelift where you simply switch out pillows, drapes, bed linens and accessories, understand you will NEVER use those items again, so don't cram them in a closet "just-in-case" you need them in the future – you won't!
- Your "stuff" is not worth what you think it's worth. The secret to selling or consigning anything is to be realistic and to understand you'll NEVER get what you paid for an item, let alone what you think it's worth.
- Just like selling a piece of real estate, the things you are trying to sell may be valuable to you, but unless someone wants what you are selling and is willing to pay for it, the item has no true value.
- A renowned antique dealer once told me: just because something is old doesn't make it an antique. Provenance papers and other means of proving an item's origin and worth are paramount when assessing an item's value.

As you go through the process of getting organized, it's important to remember: What you own does not define you and above all else, you are stronger than all the "stuff" in your life.