



I'm on vacation! Another organizing opportunity!

Anne dreads this time of year. As much as she loves the family cottage – and realizes how blessed she is to have inherited waterfront property – the annual organizing required to move the family each year seems more and more overwhelming. In fact, right now she would like to forget the whole thing and just stay home!

Part of her dilemma is her own fault, she admits. “When we closed the cottage last fall I was under such pressure at work and the children’s schedules were so full, that we just didn’t have time to properly organize, sort through all the summer clothes and equipment and clean out all the cupboards. I have no idea what I brought home, what I left up there and how I am going to find the stuff and what I will need.” Anne also admits that for the last few years as the children were getting older and accumulating more “stuff”, it was just simpler to let them take everything and worry about it later. She and her husband fell into the same trap. Now she realizes that this has led to even more chaos.

Sound familiar? In these days of approaching summer holidays, whether it be the cottage, the camper, the boat or just the children’s warm weather activities, the maze of unravelling the appropriate shoes, headgear, safety and sporting equipment, never mind the medications, technology and special food requirements, is daunting indeed. Even the most competent executive running her own company often quails at the prospect of ensuring her family’s summer fun, much less their care and feeding.

Like every other organizing challenge, this one can also be overcome. But it too takes a change in behaviours in order to get it under control. Unlike our client’s home office or closets, the summer organizational process requires commitment and contributions from every member of the family. Think about your clients and how you may help them in this area. Here are a few tips for your clients from cottage and camping pros to get you started!

Dedicate an area in the basement or garage, install a couple of inexpensive storage shelves and label them in big bold letters “Cottage Stuff”. During the off season, when you pick up something that you say to yourself “Oh, I want to take that to the cottage”, then immediately place it on the shelves. You know where it is and you can forget about it until next spring!

Transporting items to and from the cottage is made easier by using the collapsible crates. They don't take up much room when they are not being used and you can leave them up at the cottage to bring things home in the fall.

Ensure you make two separate lists 1) for the things you need to take to the cottage, and 2) things you need to bring back from the cottage! If you are a paper person, pick up one of those small tear off note pads with a magnet on the back and use it exclusively for taking back and forth your lists to the cottage and home. Keep it on the door of the fridge at both places and develop the habit of removing it from the fridge before you leave for the cottage or home. If you prefer the electronic approach, set up an electronic note in your contact database manager, such as Outlook, and keep a running list on your PDA.

Lastly, purging at the cottage needs to be done just as much as it does at home! Pull everything outside if it is a nice day or do it inside on a rainy day. Cottage or camping country has the same need for donations – clothes, toys, games and equipment. With any items of value consider holding a lawn or beach sale and spend time reminiscing over all the great memories while you relax and enjoy a good BBQ after the sale.

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