



## Small Spaces; Large Challenges – a 21st century story

We are now seeing a major trend towards smaller spaces, both to live and work. There are many sides to this phenomenon; environmental, financial, changes to traditional family structures; significant increases in the number of people choosing to live alone; and a shift to more urban settings where both young people and down-sizing seniors have easy access to cultural, sports and entertainment events as well as centralized medical facilities

Have you noticed? The new wave of residential and business development is focused on small, smaller and smallest. Not only do many of our modern day workforces spend hours daily in open cubicles, often regardless of their salary or skill set, but they go home to the latest in condo development. And this means small.

Although frequently filled with luxurious amenities such as hardwood floors and granite countertops interspaced with stainless steel appliances, it is increasingly rare in newer buildings to find luxury in either square footage or space. Kitchens have now become part of a living room wall; showers are large but closets are small, and the reality of size is bringing a whole new meaning to new furniture. Little of what previous generations took for granted would actually fit into the design of our new lifestyles. The focus now seems to be on small personal spaces and large common facilities such as gyms, media rooms, pools, storage lockers and party rooms.

For the professional organizers this is a whole new challenge – and opportunity. Never before have we been so challenged to maximize space that is so tight and limited when so many of us have and want, so much “stuff”. What is equally fascinating about this trend is the fact that more and more new and exciting “stuff” hits the markets, the media, and the wish list faster than ever before.

There is some good news, however, in this shrinking universe with ever more temptations. It's a great time to help your clients go “minimal”. A dramatic case in point is the new “e-readers” which can eliminate the need for book storage. Unless your client is addicted to the feel, smell and atmosphere of walls of books, they can now choose to carry a personal library that is completely digital and accessible any time, any place,

without taking up any more room than a single book. Works for me, although I swore it would never replace the comfort of a well worn and beloved novel that I could hang onto like a security blanket.

Ditto the need for stacks of photo albums. Although I am not suggesting that a wedding album or certain photographic memories aren't best served in an elegant album that takes pride of place in your home, digital slideshows of your adventures, family, friends and pets are more efficient, quicker to compile, and way more spectator friendly. Just think of how few people actually share your photo albums that can now see your special world via face book or emails

The list goes on. All your contacts are in your I-phone or other PDA. Recipes can be called up on line. You don't even need a collection of records, tapes, cassettes or movies any more if you are into downloading from the web. In other words, a great many traditional storage requirements have shifted. Furniture designs, including the basic components for kitchens and bathrooms reflecting the downsizing in space, recognition of finite natural resources and environmental concerns, and the general societal changes in family and personal needs. We want more time to work and play, we want the freedom to travel and exercise and there is an increasingly strong trend to an active, urban lifestyle. In other words, less is more and less means more time to play instead of worrying about household chores.

If you have ever been on a cruise ship, you have noticed how ship design maximizes every square inch of space and most bathrooms and staterooms are models of functional organization in attractive spaces. In future articles we will look at ideas to help you generate new business in organizing a number of small spaces, including storage lockers.

In the meantime, we hope the attached tips are helpful and we hope you will share some of your own. All suggestions will be credited, we assure you!

### **Tip Number One: Seek out all unused space for storage**

Don't overlook anything, behind doors, over top of doors, under beds, walls, etc. Some examples include:

- **in the closet:** make full use of all of the vertical storage in your closet, by adding additional shelving, shoe rack storage, pull-out storage units, multiple hangers and other storage tools.
- **over-the-door** hanging bag or shoe rack: Shoes on the floor of a closet create instant chaos. This small organizer will make a huge difference.

- use **under-bed storage** containers or bed drawers for out of season clothing, extra appliances and papers. Ensure they have wheels for easy access. Also consider purchasing inexpensive bed lifts to increase the height of your bed and your storage space.
- the **ceiling** is another frequently overlooked storage area. There are a number of aesthetically pleasing ceiling storage hangers which can be used for anything from toys to books to pots and pans.
- don't miss the space **above the door**. Book shelves over the door are functional and can be done in a way that they are pleasing to the eye.
- **Shelves**: Use shelves to create multiple levels of storage in a cabinet or small pantry for cans of soup or vegetables.
- **Containers**: Grouping like items in small or large containers is a great organizing trick. For example, if you have a lot of hair-care products, keep them in a container with a handle under the sink.

**Tip Number Two: Ensure everything has a dual purpose!**

- Wall beds are a brilliant way to conserve space. Wall beds recline into a wall unit saving a dramatic amount of space during the day when the bed is no longer required.
- Use a Hydra table that doubles as a coffee/dining table. A hand crank raises and lowers it, according to your needs.
- Have your computer screen double as your TV. There is a simple program that can be installed to most computers that allows you to watch TV on your computer.
- Buy a storage unit that converts from a storage cabinet to a desk.

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