



ALUMNI NEWS

South Dakota State University

Bechen '80 organizes with ease



Kathryn Richter Bechen '80

Some people are born to dance. Some are born to sing. A few are born to be wild. But Kathryn Bechen was born to organize.

Bechen, a 1980 English-education graduate, is a

professional organizer. An order expert, an anti-clutter specialist. Whatever you call it, Bechen gets paid and paid well for her professional expertise and talents. She knows how to put order and organization into her clients' lives. According to this consultant who travels the country nudging chaos into order, "Organization has nothing to do with obsessively arranging pencils, but with productivity."

So how does one become a professional organizer? In Bechen's case, it was an opportunity just waiting to be put in order. "In 1991 I lost my corporate job, and realized it was 'now or never' to start my own business. I had worked in a number of fields, and I had begun to realize that someone was almost always asking me to help them get their paperwork organized and/or set up filing and/or work flow systems, and that usually that person had been my BOSS!"

Not one to miss seizing an opportunity, (after all, this ambitious SDSU graduate had had 32 jobs since the age of 13), Bechen created Organized With Ease, a home-based business located in Omaha. Bechen says Organized With Ease is "dedicated to motivating and helping business people learn to enhance the quality of their professional and personal lives through improved organizational skills and positive self-management." And, she says with a grin, "I don't do houses."

From her 12 previous years of experience in the fields of education, library science, journalism, law and marketing/finance, she's also combined practical and proven organizing and time management techniques along with "firm guidance, discipline, humor, and humanistic empathy."

"I often joke that I've been organizing since I was five—I used to line up my shoes in my closet at that age... for fun!" Other organizational efforts included, "setting up a grocery store with shelves, cash register, and my mother's canned goods as inventory, and making my sisters work in my little enterprise while I was the 'boss.' I was always organizing some kind of 'club' and keeping notes on the agenda; I loved the beginning of school in the fall so I could choose all those school supplies and organize them to get ready for the first day of school—I was the kid whose backpack was always fully 'equipped.'"

This Brookings area native clearly acts on what she identifies as a goal. In the sixth grade, her class traveled from Arlington to the SDSU campus. Part of the field trip included a trip to the Dairy Bar and enjoying one of those memorable ice cream cones. "On the way home, I vividly recall thinking, 'I'm going to go to school there someday.'" Bechen says no one in her immediate family had gone to college, nor had they encouraged her. She didn't even really know what dorms were for on the campus. "But I know I made up my mind that it was a great place and I was going to go there someday!"

Several years later, Bechen was attending SDSU and earning her degree in English. Her enthusiasm for this land grant university is boundless. "I am very grateful for the years I had at State, and if I had to do it all over again, I wouldn't change it a bit. Why should I? It was at State that I received an excellent education, expanded my horizons, met my husband and his family and closest life friends, and had a lot of FUN doing it! Who could ask for more?"

Bechen's husband, Steve, is a 1980 mechanical engineer graduate with a business minor. He is a vice president in commercial real estate for Norwest Bank, Nebraska.

Bechen says her English-education degree from SDSU prepared her for a variety of work. When she talks about previous jobs before founding Organized With Ease, attention to detail comes immediately to the surface. Bechen can list in quick order, from 1 to 12, what the jobs were: remedial reading teacher, country school teacher, interlibrary loan library assistant, general library assistant, freelance feature writer, substitute teacher, insurance sales, retail store sales, library

assistant, legal assistant, legal secretary, administrative assistant. "Then," she says with a laugh, "I started my own business!"

So what does a professional organizer do in a typical week?

"I may consult with a new or existing client which might include gathering information on work habits, finding out what they desire to achieve; helping them clear their office and start physically organizing furniture, office supplies, bookcases, drawers, etc.; listening to their frustrations and provide both encouragement and solutions; giving advice on paper flow systems and filing systems or mail processing; working on communication skills with co-workers and/or their boss (often a cause for disorganization). I might help someone with relocating smoothly from one office to another. I might give a speech to a non-profit group, write a product-review column for the *National Association of Professional Organizers* newsletter, give a workshop at a company or university in Omaha, send out an information packet, do some freelance writing, send out order forms for my new audio tape."

The list goes on, but you get the idea. "I suppose one of the things I like most about having this business is that there are no two days alike. The variety is energizing and challenging to me because I transfer the skills I have to fit the particular job, seminar, audience, article I'm writing, etc. That's the creative part for me—same skills applied somehow to the situation at hand. I'm big on 'where there's a will, there's a way.'"

Bechen says her biggest challenges are, ironically, the flip side of her biggest delights with her business. Frustrating to her is that she's a pioneer in a field that few people know about. "It's exhilarating, yet exhausting to constantly explain what I do." People she says can be so unnerved with professional organization as a career that they keep their distance, or they tell her, "I remind them of their mother nagging them to clean up their room!"

She also says people test her to see if she really knows what she's talking about. "Sometimes people try to prove that I'm not organized," she says with no little irony. "I AM a perfectionist, but I know how to turn off the perfectionism when working with a 'chronically disorganized' person."

"OFFICE PLIGHT"

If papers are floating
all over your desk —
and the credenza
behind you is a
stacked-up mess!
If files are bulging
behind your office door!
and your calendar
is overflowing with
appointments galore!
If your computer is programmed
to the max with facts!
and by now your boss
has threatened to
give you the axe!
Never fear, for
permanent relief
is in sight!
for the chaotic
condition known as
"OFFICE PLIGHT!"
Just pick up the phone
and would you please —
quickly call KATHRYN at
"Organized With Ease."
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Not everyone Bechen works with can be helped, and that's another frustration. Although she believes there is hope for even the most disorganized person, a few clients finally won't do their part or participate in the effort to change behaviors that lead to disorganization.

She offers statistics to underscore the value being organized brings to the work place. "If an executive earns \$50,000 per year and loses one hour per day to disorder, the company loses more than \$6,000 per year. Multiply that manager by 50 managers and the annual dollar loss to the company is staggering."

Chaos? Confusion? Disorder? Disarray? Clearly Kathryn Bechen has found her calling. She simply rolls up her sleeves and gets organized.

If you want to get organized ...

Organizing Tips & Quips (32-page spiral book)
by Kathryn Bechen \$7.50 +s/h

How To Get Organized For Your Business Success (60 minute audiotape)
by Kathryn Bechen \$14.95 +s/h

Contact Kathryn Bechen at:

Organized With Ease
1337 So. 101st St., Suite 107
Omaha, NE 68124
Phone: (402) 391-8951
Fax: (402) 391-0483