



Hear us roar

The rewards of reinvention



MANDIE CRAWFORD

Janet Barclay has the kind of talent that is much envied by businesses, executives, mothers and busy people everywhere. She's the organized assistant.

Barclay, 48, graduated with an honours degree from York University, majoring in French.

She started out in financial services, then moved to manufacturing where she was an efficient administrative support employee.

Another position was in government welfare services, assisting with field work and helping clients become re-employed.

When she was laid off, she received a small package for retraining.

So in 1999, she upgraded some skills and took the training that qualified her in facilitating the Myers-Briggs assessment.

This tool is used to identify personality styles and often to assist individuals in identifying suitable areas for employment.

Lessons learned

1. A little money, a lot of hard work and even more patience is what it takes to build a good foundation for a full-time business. Barclay has spent three years getting ready to go full time with her business.

2. Persistence pays off. Barclay took the tools and education she had acquired and redeveloped them to create a service people need.

3. Sometimes being uncomfortable can pay off. Getting laid off from her last position and being offered one that wasn't right for her pushed her to full-time self-employment.

"When I finished the training, I saw so many possibilities for using the information to help others," she said.

She returned to the workforce part-time at an employment resource centre in Hamilton, assisting people with computer skills and resume writing.

While there, she reflected on her training.

It took three years before she had a well-honed idea she could see working as a business.

In January 2002, Barclay launched Organized Assistant as a part-time business.

When starting out, Barclay invested her own money in building her business, a little at a time. Working from a home office, she concentrated on a



Janet Barclay sits in front of well organized bookshelves in her home office.

RON ALBERTSON, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

website and networking.

This past June when her part-time position was phased out and she was offered another position, she realized she wanted to work in her own business full time and made the plunge.

She networked more often and spoke to specialty groups and clubs on organizing, time management and goal setting. She also joined a support organization — Professional Organizers in Canada — and became a board member.

During her time as director of membership, she helped the organization grow from 100 members to over 400.

"POC has also helped me grow my business," she explained.

"It helps clients to locate the kind of

organizing services they need on the website and also helps to educate the public on what it is that professional organizers do."

As a professional organizer, Barclay can do anything from organize files and paper flow to sending out newsletters and writing copy, memos and letters for organizations.

But what she loves best is working with small businesses to set goals and get their operations working efficiently.

"Lots of people know how to send e-mail and to do the basics when it comes to e-mail and documents, but I can also teach them ways they can get their files on their computer more organized and help them to be more efficient."

Barclay charges \$65 an hour for on-site organizing and less for her virtual services.

She also does special consulting, where she can come in and assess what you need to have done, then let you decide what you can do on your own and what you want to hire her to do.

Barclay spends 15 to 20 hours a week with clients and another 20 hours promoting her business.

She expects to replace her part-time income this year and surpass that next year.

Barclay can be reached on the web at www.organizedassistant.com or by calling 905-538-1044.

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