

Shipshape Solutions turns 5

Reflections on five years as a business owner

By **ANGIE HYPHE**

The month of August 2021 was the fifth anniversary of my professional organizing business. While every anniversary is significant, I eagerly awaited this one.

WHY IS FIVE A BIG DEAL?

Why am I so excited about this particular anniversary? Depending on the source, experts say 50-90% of small businesses fail within five years. I was determined that Shipshape Solutions would NOT fall prey to that fate. I vowed that my business would last at least five years.

Starting a business was the most terrifying and rewarding thing I've ever done. The last five years have been a wild ride.

I'm thrilled that after five years, Shipshape Solutions is not just surviving, but thriving. I attribute the success to wonderful clients, a few lucky breaks, the support of my amazing husband, and (above all) to God. I thank God for the opportunity to use the skills and passions He has given me to help others. The icing on the cake is that I absolutely LOVE my job.

A SHIPSHAPE TIMELINE

Following is a brief outline of significant events that show how I went from a dream to getting paid to do what I love:

The dream begins (circa 2004)

By 2004, I had earned a bachelor's degree and a master's degree. I had spent a year teaching high school science, a year and a half working as a pediatric physician assistant, and I was now a full-time mother, homemaker and volunteer.



CONTRIBUTED

Throughout this experience, I learned to believe in myself, to reach out for help when needed, and to take a leap of faith. I encourage anyone who wants to make a big change in their life to do the same. Don't spend the rest of your life wondering what would have happened if you'd just taken that leap.

While volunteering for a community theater organizing costumes and props, I remarked, "I love this! I could do this every day!" I had always been drawn to organizing. Through online searches, I discovered that organizing was not just a hobby, but a legitimate career option. I found the National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals and started digging into what it would take.

Although I was certain I would enjoy the work and that I had some of the necessary skills, I also realized

it wasn't a job I could easily jump into. It would require starting a business. My heart sank. Starting a business seemed way too difficult. I put that idea out of my mind — for quite awhile.

Put up or shut up (March 2016)

While my husband, Eric, and I were riding bicycles in March 2016, we had a monumental conversation. I had been working as an elementary school instructional assistant for three years. I enjoyed my job, but I was restless and needed to decide whether to stay in that position.

I couldn't stop thinking about organizing. We had talked about it often over the years. But I'd always concluded that starting a business was meant for someone smarter and with more business savvy than me.

This conversation on the trail finally changed my mind. It was now or never. I didn't want to look back years down the road and wonder what could have been. I decided to take the leap of faith and start the business.

Shipshape launches (August 2016)

I spent the next four months researching the profession, joining NAPO and taking their introductory courses, meeting with Aundrea Wilcox with KOSBE (Kingsport Office of Small Business & Entrepreneurship) to complete the steps to set up a new business, and joining the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce.

On Aug. 16, 2016, I officially launched my website, <https://shipshape.solutions/>. It was official. I became a business owner and started serving clients.

Nonprofit work begins (January 2017)

When Kingsport celebrated its centennial in 2017, businesses were encouraged to do something to celebrate using the slogan, "What's Your 100?" I decided to donate 100 volunteer hours of organizing services to nonprofits. It was such a great experience that I have continued volunteering for nonprofits ever since.

Newspaper column begins (January 2017)

I needed to bring more awareness to my services. I had been writing a blog, but I wanted a broader reach. As a former volun-

teer writer for the Kingsport Times News food page, I thought readers may enjoy an organizing column as well. An editor at the Times News agreed. My bimonthly column transitioned into this monthly column that continues to this day. You can find all of my columns on the blog page of my website.

Laurie joins the team (May 2018)

I met Laurie Harvey through a mutual acquaintance. Laurie's initial goal in contacting me was to discover new marketing ideas for her own organizing business. She loved organizing but didn't enjoy the behind-the-scenes work. By the end of our meeting, Laurie asked if I would hire her. She joined the team and quickly transitioned from competitor to fantastic friend. I thank God for all that Laurie brings to the business.

'Daytime Tri-Cities' demos begin (August 2018)

Through a contact at the Kingsport Chamber, I was connected to the TV show "Daytime Tri-Cities." After my first on-air demo in August 2018, they signed me up for a monthly appearance. You can find my "Daytime" videos on the videos page of my website.

Getting certified (November 2020)

Very few professional organizers have earned the title of CPO, Certified Professional Organizer. Certification requires documentation of 1,500 hours of paid work experience, commitment to the highest ethical standards, and passing a difficult standardized exam. I am proud to be the only CPO in the Tri-Cities area after earning my certification in 2020.

'Unholy Mess' published (December 2020)

My first book, "Unholy Mess: What the Bible Says about Clutter" was published on Amazon (<https://amzn.to/3mydLb9>) in December 2020. Publishing this book was the culmination of months of research and writing about the spiritual implications of clutter.

The book covers three types of clutter: physical clutter (our stuff), schedule clutter (a packed calendar and to-do list), and attention clutter (not being focused on the present, including addiction to our phones).

Stay tuned for news about the Bible study companion book I'm currently working on to accompany this book.

Onward...

Throughout this experience, I learned to believe in myself, to reach out for help when needed, and to take a leap of faith. I encourage anyone who wants to make a big change in their life to do the same. Don't spend the rest of your life wondering what would have happened if you'd just taken that leap.

I'm grateful for everyone who has supported my business in any way, especially my wonderful clients.

I look forward to more years of teaching others, helping them achieve their organizing goals, and giving back to the community.

Angie Hyche is a professional organizer and the owner of Shipshape Solutions. Her first book, "Unholy Mess: What the Bible Says about Clutter" is now available. You can email her at angie@beshipshape.com.

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