

Conquering clutter

JMU alumni business helps organize the masses BY COLLEEN CALLERY ('11)

Overstuffed closets. Piles of financial statements. Bags of holiday décor. Rooms filled with children's toys. Beyond being necessary evils in most of our lives, this list shares another, frustrating commonality – life would be easier if they would organize themselves. And that's exactly what **Ed Wotring ('02)** has set out to do with his company, Color-Coded.

Based in Arlington, Va., Color-Coded is a team of professional organizers who've been tackling almost any kind of clutter since 2008. The Color-Coded team offers organizing systems and solutions for homeowners, small businesses and people who have gone through major life changes like marriage or moving. Okay, so the clutter doesn't exactly organize itself, but the Color-Coded team works hard to make it seem that easy.

It may not be the first career choice one would expect from a computer information systems major, but the entrepreneurial opportunities were undeniable for Wotring. Citing his rigorous business courses and involvement in the international business fraternity Delta Sigma Pi, he found the inspiration to take his career in his own hands.

"I have always been fairly organized," says Wotring. "But my business partner and fiancée, Alejandra Costello has been organizing all her life. It was not until she discovered the National Association of Professional Organizers that we realized organizing is a profession. We created Color-Coded to pursue our desire to be entrepreneurs."

Wotring began assembling his team by attracting organizers who were already members of the National Association of Professional Organizers. "Organizing is a very personal service that requires confidentiality," explains Wotring. "As members of NAPO our organizers abide by the NAPO code of ethics, which provides a level of assurance and professionalism for our clients' privacy."

However, professionalism and talent may not always be enough to convince everyone that hiring organization specialists is worth the cost. Wotring says organizing a frequently used space offers both mental and emotional benefits. "An organized living or workspace can reduce stress, increase motivation and help with mental focus," he explains. "Being organized leads to efficiency and productivity, which have a ripple effect of positive outcomes in all areas of one's life and career."



Color-Coded owners Ed Wotring ('02) and Alejandra Costello keep clients organized and share organizational tips via social media.

Getting organized may also offer financial benefits when one learns to use a smaller space more efficiently. And the argument makes sense. Instead of spending money on storage units or moving items that no one uses, optimizing an existing space and getting rid of unused items can actually save money.

But Color-Coded is dedicated to their clients varying needs, offering flexible programs and options for getting organized. They provide online organizing services where clients can pay a monthly membership fee for several coaching calls per month. The team also offers a wealth of tools to help anyone get organized. This option is cost-effective and facilitates relationships with clients across the nation and abroad.

The Color-Coded team has jumped into social media to help share their organization systems and services. The team maintains a blog and uses other social media platforms. "Customers enjoy the fact that they are able to receive coaching and learn organizing techniques and tips but still perform the organizing and de-cluttering themselves," says Wotring.

Everyone at Color-Coded contributes to the blog, and some of the company's JMU student interns spent summer 2010 working to further their communications and marketing efforts with social media and search engine optimization. After receiving an email from Wotring through the marketing department in the JMU College of Business, **Sandra Tran ('11)** and **Larissa**

Cookson ('10) jumped on board with Color-Coded's mission. "It is important for me to stay organized because it has been so beneficial in my life," says Tran. "Color-Coded really provides a great service to those who feel overwhelmed and can't figure out where to start."

Wotring and the team at Color-Coded enjoy sharing their expertise. The company not only serves as a positive model in the community, holding seminars in retirement communities and at elementary schools, but it also serves as example for aspiring professionals and students. "It was inspiring to see Alejandra and Ed, basically fresh out of college, pursue the grand endeavor of running their own company," says Tran. "It didn't seem easy, but it looked do-able and rewarding, which was a great motivating factor for me." ■

* Get organized at www.color-coded.net.