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INTERVIEW SERIES

**How To Save Money And Live Better
Just By Organizing Your Clutter**

Michael Senoff Interviews Elizabeth Hagen

 Michael Senoff's
HardToFind Seminars.com

Dear Student,

I'm Michael Senoff, founder and CEO of HardToFindSeminars.com.

For the last five years, I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds.

And along the way, I've created a successful home-based publishing business all from my two-car garage.

When my first child was born, he was very sick, and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home.

Now, my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable audio business interviews.

I knew that I needed a site that contained strategies, solutions, and inside information to help you operate more efficiently

I've learned a lot in the last five years, and today I'm going to show you the skills that you need to survive.

It is my mission, to assist those that are very busy with their careers

And to really make my site different from every other audio content site on the web, I have decided to give you access to this information in a downloadable format.

Now, let's get going.

Michael Senoff

Michael Senoff

Founder & CEO: www.hardtfindseminars.com

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How To Save Money And Live Better Just By Organizing Your Clutter

Believe it or not, your messy desk could be costing you serious money every year. Not only does clutter make you feel stressed out and overwhelmed, but it also slows down your productivity. In fact, the average person spends an hour a day just looking for stuff.

So in this 45-minute audio, you'll meet Elizabeth Hagen. Elizabeth is an organizing expert who does speeches and workshops designed to help people become more efficient. And after you're done listening to her interview, you'll know how to manage everything from a messy desk to habitual procrastination.

You'll Also Learn...

- Simple tips for small business owners that will keep you organized and on track
- Elizabeth's "5 F" plan for getting rid of the paper pile for good
- How to turn your messy desk into a clean, efficient "Command Center"
- Time-and cost-saving computer tools that will help you offline as well
- Why Elizabeth prefers action cards instead of to-do lists and how to make them work for you
- How perfectionism, procrastination and multitasking actually make you less productive and ways to stop yourself from letting them slow down your day
- What mind mapping is and how to use it to tackle even your biggest challenges
- The strategies and incentives Elizabeth uses to promote her workshops and speeches
- How Elizabeth gets 30% of her audience to buy her products after her speeches

According to Elizabeth, becoming organized will not only bring up your self-confidence, it will also help you take charge of your day and your life. And this interview gives you just the right tools to get started today.

I'm Michael Senoff, Founder and CEO of HardToFindSeminars.com. For the last five years I've interviewed the world's best business and marketing minds. Along the way I've created a successful publishing business all from my home from my two-car garage. When my first child was born he was very sick and it was then that I knew I had to have a business that I could operate from home. Now my challenge is to build the world's largest free resource for online, downloadable audio business interviews. I knew I needed a site that contains strategy, solution and inside angles to help you live better and save and make more money and stay healthier and to get more out of life. I've learned a lot in the last five years and today I'm going to show you the skills you need to survive.

Elizabeth: Organize with confidence. It is not only the tool systems but I really get into the most important thing, Michael, is people think it's all about the outer junk. It's about the inner junk. So how do you feel about yourself inside? I tell the people in the audience, you know, I can give you the best workshop ever. You can go home, decided on two of the systems, buy my products and get organized. I can almost guarantee you won't maintain it if you don't feel you deserve to live and work in the best environment possible, it won't stick.

So you've got to start with your self-confidence first and you need to believe that you are a fantastic worthwhile person and that you deserve the best life possible.

Hi, it's Michael Senoff with Michael Senoff's HardToFindSeminars.com. The title of this interview is called "How to Save Money and Live Better Just By Organizing Your Clutter." Believe it or not, your messy desk could be costing you serious bucks every year. Not only does clutter make you feel stressed out and overwhelmed but it also slows down your productivity. In fact, the average person spends at least one hour a day just looking for stuff. So, in this forty-five minute audio interview you'll meet Elizabeth Hagen. Elizabeth is an organizing expert who does speeches and workshops designed to help people to become more efficient. And after you're done listening to her interview, you'll know how to manage everything from a messy desk to a habitual procrastination. You'll also learn in this interview some simple tips for small business owners that will keep you organized and on track. You'll learn Elizabeth's Five F Plan for getting rid of the paper pile for good. You'll learn how to turn your messy desk into a clean, efficient, command center. You'll learn about some time and cost-saving computer tools that will help you offline as well. You'll learn why Elizabeth prefers actions cards instead of to-do lists and how to make them work for you. You'll learn how perfectionism, procrastination and multi-tasking actually makes you less productive in ways to stop yourself from letting them slow down your day. You'll learn what mind mapping is and how to use it to tackle even your biggest challenges. You'll learn the strategies and incentives Elizabeth uses to promote her workshops and speeches. You'll also learn how Elizabeth gets 30 percent of her audience to buy her products after her speeches. According to Elizabeth, becoming organized will not only bring up your self-confidence, it will also help you take charge of your day and your life. In this

interview with Elizabeth gives you just the right tools to get started today. Now let's get going.

Michael: Why don't we start from the beginning? Tell me, how did this whole organizing thing start with you? Were you a real organized person or were you totally opposite?

Elizabeth: Well, no, I wasn't born organized, but something that happened in 1985. In 1985 my husband and I had four children under the age of five. And to say my life was chaotic and disorganized is to minimize it greatly. I don't know what I was doing. But I realized something one day as I was living in this stressed kind of chaotic environment and I thought I was being a very good mom or home manager. I realized I didn't like myself very much.

And then I realized why I didn't like myself. I didn't treat people in their life like I want to treat them. This was such a huge "ah-ha" moment for me.

Michael: What made you like all a sudden realize that?

Elizabeth: I think it was one time I snapped at a child over something dumb, only because either I couldn't find something or maybe I forgot their cupcakes for preschool. It was something dumb. I thought, this isn't right at all. I need to change some things here. I love those children more than anything. And I thought, maybe there's some books out there on how to run a home because I'd had my own clothing store business before I got married.

And I had run that pretty efficiently and organized. So I knew I could probably figure this out. And so I went to the library, Michael. Remember this was back in 1985 before [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). I bought a couple of books. There's one book on *How To Be A Home Manager*. I started implementing those systems and tools.

As I did and then I fine-tune them for my family I realized something as the clutter went away and the casts went away and the environment started functioning better I felt better about myself and liked myself. I became a better home manager and mom.

Michael: Do you remember back in those days, like when you were reading that book and you stopped this chaotic house and four kids under five. I'm sure it's crazy. What was some of the things you learned in that book that you put into action right away that you saw some results?

Elizabeth: Simple things that you'd think you'd know but I didn't know, like planning your meals a week ahead of time. I mean, who's going to think of that? So on Sundays I planned the meals for the whole week, get all the groceries, and that's an enormous stress off, knowing what I was serving for dinner every

night. I started doing laundry three days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Michael: Rather than seven days a week?

Elizabeth: Rather than wait until it –

Michael: All piled up.

Elizabeth: Yeah, just kind of messy and stuff. It was normal. It was a scheduling thing. Just like you do in business and thinking ahead, planning ahead, things like that. Oh, and I started using a paper-based day planner where I would write everything down and all the preschool things and kindergarten and soccer. All those things got into a calendar instead of trying to remember everything in my head. Just things like that. Just simple things that yet kind of mind-blowing to me, I guess.

Michael: Yeah, did you see a dramatic difference? Or was it a slow progression?

Elizabeth: I'd say, Michael, a slow progression as each system I was implementing and then fine-tooth for this busy household. Slowly but surely we changed things around.

Michael: So, organization is kind of synonymous with time management.

Elizabeth: Very much so but even more, Michael, it's synonymous with confidence. Because when a person can walk into their office and find what they need immediately, or when you look at their email inboxes, twenty instead of two thousand, you feel good about yourself. I think it's really all about confidence.

Michael: I've heard some of the stats on how much time is wasted because of people being unorganized. Anything on that?

Elizabeth: The average person spends an hour a day just looking for stuff. If you would add that up that's six weeks of work a year going down the tubes that you're wasting time, six weeks.

Michael: That's frustrating.

Elizabeth: Oh, it's frustrating. And when you can't find something, who do you get mad at? Yourself. You call yourself names and you don't know what to do and there's a line of misinformation then they're getting angry because they don't have it. It's not a good feeling at all.

Michael: Okay. What about those people who just thrive on it? They love the drama and you know there's people out there. They love it. They have something to complain about. Talk to me about those people and I know you've seen them. How do you categorize that type of person?

Elizabeth: When they say, “Oh, I’ve got all these piles. I know where everything is. I work best in a cluttered environment. I always ask them this question. “How is that working for you? I mean, truly, how’s that working for you?” I see a big smile on their face, “It’s great. I’m happy.” I go, “That’s fantastic. You’re doing great.”

But I would say seven times out of ten, Michael, if they really stop to think how’s it really working, it’s not just a crutch kind of excuse and you say, “You know what? It’s really not working that well. I really can’t find things. I feel overwhelmed. I don’t know what to do so I say it’s okay so I don’t have to think about it.”

Michael: What do people get out of being unorganized? Some people who are chronically unorganized, chronically late, there’s something in it for them, isn’t there?

Elizabeth: Well, I don’t know. There are organizers, Michael, who specialize with ADD clients and chronically disorganized clients and I’m not one of those.

Michael: Okay, just curious.

Elizabeth: Yeah, they would have more information than I would on that.

Michael: All right, so take me back to your story. So you started implementing some things in your life from this one book. Did you pull ideas from multiple books? How much stuff was on this subject?

Elizabeth: No, it was that one book, plus, I thought back to my own business life before I got married, some systems and tools I used with that and use those in my home. For example, there’s this planning ahead. Or another one that was one of my favorites was you can imagine four kids under five. My nights were as busy as my days. You know, a kid could wake up sick or need a glass of water or whatnot.

So I really quickly learned to plan for the next day the night before because I wanted to, Michael, wake up in the morning ahead of the game not behind. And so every night we’d put on some catchy music and we’d play the music and we’d all have a pick-up time around the house. I would set the breakfast table for the next morning. We’d get the backpacks out. We’d make the school lunches.

When I woke up, and I always woke up before the kids – that was key – our day started great. So something simple like that was really huge for me.

Michael: Yeah, that’s nice. You know, I’ve got two kids, an eight year old and a six year old and I can relate.

Elizabeth: Yeah, exactly. But anyway, so, as I was implementing these systems and tools and started to work, time went by and I just loved it. I started to really love organization and order and doing all this. I have kind of a joke that when the fourth child started kindergarten, I had so much time on my hands that we had a fifth child. We really did.

So when he started preschool and school, I realized that these kids were going to grow up and leave me someday and I started looking around for work that I wanted to do. I didn't want to work for anybody else. I had been at home for nineteen years. So I discovered then NAPO, the National Association of Professional Organizers in 2000 and then joined that organization and that's how I started my business.

Michael: Did you ever even know that that existed?

Elizabeth: Never knew.

Michael: When you found it were you like, "oh, wow."

Elizabeth: I couldn't believe it and then I went to the first conference. It was in Austin in 2000. I walked in and I felt like I'd come home. I was around all these people who loved label makers as much as I did. They loved file folders. You didn't have to explain what you did to somebody else. They got it. It was like, "I cannot believe how people can do this and make money doing this." It was great.

Michael: How big of an industry is this organizing industry?

Elizabeth: It's really growing. We now have forty-two hundred members, mainly in the United States and more on the East Coast and West Coast, Michael, is much bigger than in the Midwest. But it's getting big and I think people are realizing that just like if a cleaning lady or a nanny, you know a special organizer is one more person to help you make your life easier. So I think it's just going to get bigger and bigger.

Michael: Have you found this in your research in the years you've been doing this, are there certain type of people who are more organized than others, like ethnic-wise? Any kind of trends like that or all across the board some people are organized and some people aren't?

Elizabeth: Yeah. I would say so. I work more with women than men. So people say, "Well, women must be more unorganized." I don't think that's so true. I think that a lot of men have women in their life to organize and help them.

Michael: How about your family, I mean, do you make a decision to get organized but your family, your husband or someone's partner, they have to kind of be on

the same side. I mean, do you need support from your family to make it work within a home?

Elizabeth: I think so. But I tell you what, Michael, the number one question I get at workshops is a woman will raise her hand or a man but usually a woman and say, "You know, I'm doing okay but it's my husband. What can I do about my husband?"

I always say, "The only person you can change in your life is yourself. So work on yourself first, get your stuff put together and hopefully they'll see what difference it makes in your life and how content you are that they may want to apply some of those systems."

Now, for myself and my husband we've been married almost thirty years. I don't know that he's all that organized but he appears to be because a) he's married to me, and b) he has eight women he works with in his clinic. So he's got a lot of help.

Michael: Wow. What does your husband do?

Elizabeth: Chiropractor.

Michael: Okay, very good. So you realized that your kids were in school, you were quite organized, you didn't want to go to work for someone, you really love this and you decided to kind of make it a business?

Elizabeth: Yes, and also, during these years other moms would ask me, "Well, Elizabeth, why do use this (inaudible) binder for your family notebook?" They would always ask me about my calendar, different things that I did. I loved sharing it so that was part of it, too. So yeah, I started my business.

It's interesting I did because it took a difference in my life. I thought that all I would have to do is write a letter to everyone I knew and tell them about my business and my phone would ring off the hook. And it didn't. It didn't ring at all. I thought, I can't believe this.

Michael: What was the model? If that worked in a perfect world, what is it you were selling in that letter? What was the offer?

Elizabeth: I was selling that I would come into their home and help them set up some systems like I have in my home and help them get organized.

Michael: And how much were you going to charge for that?

Elizabeth: Oh, way back then like 35 bucks an hour.

Michael: Did you learn this from the Association?

Elizabeth: We're not allowed to speak in the Associations so I just picked a number out of a hat.

Michael: Okay, so that was a model of per hour type deal.

Elizabeth: Yes.

Michael: Okay, and did you try a letter?

Elizabeth: Yes, I sent this letter out and got no response.

Michael: How many people did you send it out to?

Elizabeth: Oh, maybe like a hundred. And then sent it again. No response. I was talking to a friend who owned a spa, said, "Elizabeth, I got a small meeting room. Why don't you hold workshops?" I said, "Are you crazy?" I was always a shy person in high school. Hated speech class. Never, never got them ever to speak but I'm a really determined, stubborn woman and I want to make this business work.

I thought, you know what? If that's what it takes I'll do it. Because you see, I had to educate people, Michael, why they would need someone like me because people who have never heard of this would be a little hard to hire someone for something you've never heard of.

Michael: Was it going to be a free workshop?

Elizabeth: A free workshop. She invited her people. I invited two people I had. Five people showed up. Three were her staff and two were people that had (inaudible) through me, I guess. So the same thing happened, Michael. I had typed my speech. I read my speech and I can't imagine how awful it was.

But, a gal named Julie sent me an audience and she hired me and she was the absolute, best client I ever had. We did her whole house twice. She was pleasant, funny, was a blast working with her. I realized that speaking is a number one strategy for us in the service industry business because the typical organizers, this is a personal – you know, we're in your drawers, literally seeing all your stuff. Would you want to hire someone to be in your drawers off a yellow page ad? I wouldn't think so. I think you ought to meet this person for to see if you even like them and want them in your house.

Michael: Yeah, it's a real trust type thing.

Elizabeth: Yes. And so I started getting more and more of these little teeny workshops, and then, one day, someone came up to me in a workshop and said, "Elizabeth, this is great. What would you charge to speak to my office staff?" And I said, "Fifty dollars?" She said, "Sure, great." I thought, oh, my gosh, I can't believe I'm making fifty bucks to speak so that was just the start and

then I tried speaking and of course my fee has raised and raised and raised now.

And now, three years ago I joined the National Speakers Association. I think all over the country I actually do very little hands-on organizing anymore. It's mainly all speaking.

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Michael: Over those years about how many clients did you do hands-on organizing?

Elizabeth: Oh, I'd say a good 200, 250.

Michael: So, you like the speaking business better?

Elizabeth: It's not that I don't like the organizing because what I'm doing I'm great. But I'd rather speak. A) I can get more people at one time, and b) it pays a lot better.

Michael: You can leverage your time.

Elizabeth: Oh, much better.

Michael: So, when you were doing those 200 clients you were charging per hour.

Elizabeth: Well, actually I charged per hour, Michael, for about three to four years and then, I worked as a coach. She said, go to package pricing so I worked real hard on packages. I had two packages I offered. I would bring in the supplies you would need for that area. It was a win/win. If the client has to go out and buy anything, I got everything here and get a lot more done.

Also with the package pricing a) I was helping the client more. I was making a lot more money also.

Michael: So when you were putting on these workshops, tell me some of the marketing strategies you used to get people to your workshops. You mentioned one. You kind of did a joint venture with the spa lady and she endorsed it and invited some of her people. What are some other ways as you did these workshops, that you got people to them?

Elizabeth: About six years ago I started doing monthly email newsletter. And so I always promote my workshops in the newsletter.

Michael: So was it a local newsletter?

Elizabeth: No, the email was also around the world but anybody who was in this area would see it in town and then also, I thought of in my town, what businesses

do I frequent that are locally owned? For example, [17:02.5] a monthly cooking place where I worked out, the high-end consignment shops, things like that. I went in and told them, “If you will put my flyers up about these workshops, then I will put your business card or flyer for you on the chair in the audience.” So again, it was kind of [17:15.0] (inaudible) line type thing.

Michael: Very good, and people did that...

Elizabeth: Yeah, and it also in my town if you offer a free workshop all the community calendars will post your event for free. I did that and I've been written up quite a bit in the paper. I've done a news – not so much recently but more I did in a lot of the organizing. I got to be pretty well-known here also has helped.

Michael: Your workshops, how large did they get?

Elizabeth: I think about the biggest was like 120. The average is around 40 to 50.

Michael: So you put on the workshops and what would you teach in the workshops?

Elizabeth: Organize with confidence, and it is not only the tools and systems but I really get into the most important thing, Michael, is people think it's all about the outer junk. It's about the inner junk. It's a how do you feel about yourself inside? Because I tell the people in the audience, “Now I can give you the best books ever, you can go home, buy the tools and systems, buy my products and get organized.

“I can almost guarantee you won't maintain it, because if you don't feel that you deserve to live and work in the best environment possible, it won't stick. So you've got to start with your self-confidence, first and you need to believe that you are a fantastic worthwhile person and that you deserve the best life possible.”

Michael: So you've looked at a lot of people's homes and you've had over 200 personal clients who are quite unorganized. What did you learn about these people? Is there a common denominator that you saw working with these clients?

Elizabeth: It's a good question. One thing that I found was many of them, especially with those that had a lot of stuff, was that we spent time with them they'll tell you their personal stories. Most of the time there's some trauma in childhood, abuse, death of a parent or sibling or alcoholism or something. My take on it, I'm no therapist, is that this whole form of your heart was this terrible, terrible pain. I think that people grow up if they don't deal with that pain and get therapy and get healed of it they try and fill that void with stuff.

Michael: Yeah, like compulsive shopping or quarters?

Elizabeth: Yeah. So that's kind of common things that usually almost always there is something in childhood that they need to talk about and get out. I would tell them some but that's the thing. They need more help. Sent to a professional person who did this, but that was pretty common, Michael.

Michael: Yes, and you saw that. So you could get them organized and patched up and cleaned up the house but unless they dealt with their issues it probably wasn't going to stick.

Elizabeth: Exactly.

Michael: That's interesting. I guess maybe you didn't have much experience with super organized people or maybe you did. I mean, was there a common denominator that you saw about people who were very organized and efficient that you are?

Elizabeth: Mainly they'll hire me because they aren't organized but sometimes they come to my workshops and I found that they come because they're like me. They love this stuff and they're always looking for the next best thing or something else that they maybe don't know about. And so they're a lot of fun to speak to because they love the stuff as much as I do.

Michael: Do you maybe small business owners, can we talk about some practical tips that they can implement?

Elizabeth: You've got – I'll start off with some things that I use and I teach and we can go from there. Simple things I use that are like no-brainers that people don't use them, one is having kitchen timer in your office.

Michael: Why?

Elizabeth: Here's the deal. Okay, so you're working in your office, you're on the computer. You work on a project. You're pretty focused and you think, you know what? I really want to check my emails just for a minute. And so you go to your email, and you know how it goes. An hour goes by and you're still in your email, which got you off your project you're working on. You're getting nothing done.

So I tell people to have a simple kitchen timer. When you think to yourself, oh, I want to go do this for a second, or check my email for a minute. Okay, I'll allow you to do that but set the timer for five minutes. When the buzzer goes off get back to work. The key to productivity and success in business is being focused and being organized. That's just one little simple tool I use.

Michael: Okay. What other tips do you have about email? When to check it, how often to check it and not to check it?

Elizabeth: One suggestion is that if you're going down email land all in the day getting nothing done, you've got to get a hold on this. Now is to tell you set maybe three to four times a day to check your email. But, let's say it's 9:00, noon, and 3:00. At those times just check your email and deal with each one individually. Don't look at all the fun ones first and then open them and re-read them and so forth. Deal with it. Reply to it. Delete it. Fold it. Print it out, whatever you need to do but deal with it as much to the person as you can and then move to the next one.

What we do is we skim and then nothing gets done. The other thing with email is I think is so important are the folders to making your email folder box and then you can set rules. I use Outlook because you can set rules, for example. I have sent all the newsletters I get to a rule that all go into a newsletter folder. I read them once a week. I could be busy all week reading people's newsletters and get nothing done.

Michael: That's good advice. You know, I use Outlook and I use Outlook's calendar and I also just started using the Google calendar where I can schedule things on my calendar but I could see it. My wife could have access to it and my assistant can have access to it. Are there some online tools that you know about that can help really organize someone who's working mainly online?

Elizabeth: I didn't even know about that, Michael, so, no, I don't. But one thing I want to say, did you know, Michael, if you right click on email and drag it to your calendar icon and then choose "move here" as appointment with task? You will move that right to a calendar date when you want to deal with that email. You'll go out of your inbox and go right to the calendar –

Michael: I just did it and I didn't know it and I see it. That's great.

Elizabeth: That's a cool thing. You could also right click on email and move it to task and make it a to-do with a deadline date.

Michael: See, that is a great tip.

Elizabeth: Isn't that amazing?

Michael: I mean, right click. That's absolutely awesome. You see? We're sitting on all our software that we have, Word and Excel and Outlook. They're wonderful tools but most people only 2 or 3 percent of what they can do.

Elizabeth: I know. I mean, Outlook is amazing.

Michael: You know it really well?

Elizabeth: I know it maybe 10 percent but I wish I knew it 25 percent.

Michael: That's a great tip. So people need to just spend an hour or get that – who's the guy on TV that sells the CD courses where you can learn Outlook and learn how to use these software? I mean, the technology and the Internet and the software are just incredible time leverages.

Elizabeth: Oh, it's amazing.

Michael: I know there's a book out. I think it's called *Tame That Paper Tiger*.

Elizabeth: You mean *The Paper Tiger* by Barbara Hemphill.

Michael: I haven't read it but tell me about it and do you have any ideas on how I can tame the paper tiger?

Elizabeth: Yes, but I have my own plan. Can I give you mine?

Michael: Yeah, sure.

Elizabeth: Okay. It's called the Five F Plan. May I give you a website that you can go down all those flyers for it?

Michael: What's the website?

Elizabeth: It's ElizabetHagen.com/pdf/VF.pdf. That's the Five F Plan. It's pretty self-explanatory. On the sheet the biggest issue that people have that I've seen in my workshops and my clients is the paper pile up. They don't know if it's just paper. Now they print their emails, they print the website. I mean, it's just getting worse and worse.

The reason you have paper piles is that there is no decision-making going on as the paper comes into your life. You walk into your office with a bunch of mail and other papers. You set it down. You start going through it. You go, "Oh, it's a bill. I want to pay it but I don't want to right now. I'll put it here for now." "Oh, here's a magazine. I want to read it but I don't have time right now. I'll put it here for now." That's how the piles form.

We've got to start making decisions. If you make one of the Five F decisions, you'll never pile again. So let me list you the Five F's. I'll quickly go through them and you can tell me if you want any more information.

The first F is Finished, finished. The second F is Fast, F-A-S-T. The third F is For Others, Fourth F – Future Short Term, and fifth F is Future Long Term.

A paper can be finished in two ways. When you go through your pile always ask yourself, what's the next action? Well, if there is no action the paper is finished. It's either finished that you can toss it, or recycle it or it's finished that the action is done but you may need to refer to it at some point in the

future. That's a reference file. So finished paper is either get rid of or you can file it.

The Fast paper is if it takes two minutes or less, just do it. I call it the "Nike rule". Two minutes or less. Call the person back, fob an email, pay the bill, two minutes or less. Do it. Get it out of your life.

The third F is For Others. That's the someone else could do it. Your assistant, spouse, child and so forth.

But the fourth F, this is the most important one. This is Future Short Term. I would bet if you have piles on your desk they're all future short term. Future short terms means you need to take some action on it. You don't have time right now. It's kind of a bigger deal and maybe it's something in the future. You're afraid if you put it away you're not going to remember to do it and not find it when you need it. So therefore you pile it and can't find it anywhere.

And Michael, I heard a statistic that every paper on your desk distracts you five times a day. So multiply that out. So we need a brainless system for this future short term papers. If you think this is the month it'll take care of most of your piles. It's called the Command Center, the command center. There are three parts.

The first part is what's called a Desk Tap File Box. It sits up on top of your desk. It's rectangular and holds hanging file folders. The nicest ones you can buy are at TheContainerStore.com. That's the first part. The most important part is called the Tickler File. Isn't this called the tickler file is because it tickles your memory when to do things. What it is, is a one-piece unit that's thirty-one file folders of the days of the month and twelve more for months of the year. If you want to see a picture of what it looks like you can go to TheTicklerFile.com.

So that sits in front of the box and that's the most important piece and the million dollar question to ask as you pick up these future short term paper is when do I need to see this again so that it's done on time? So today let's say it's a fifteenth of the month and you need to see it by the twentieth to get it done. Drop this paper to the twentieth folder and forget about it. It's kind of like a calendar for paper.

And in the months ahead, for Future, for example. I'm flying to Chicago in November so my airplane itinerary is in November. When November comes because if it's the fifteenth of the month, the fifteenth and on is this month's, one through fourteen, becomes the next month. So at the end of month I go to my next month's folder. I pull everything out and make a decision of when to do it and drop it in that folder.

I'll tell you what, Michael, when all these papers on your desk are in a folder on the day you need to do them, talk about a stress reliever. It's just huge.

Michael: Yeah, that's nice.

Elizabeth: And the thing is, Michael, this will never crash on you or run out of batteries. It'll always be there for you. But you've got to sort of habit of putting things in daily and taking things out daily. Once you do that you're pretty much good to go.

Michael: What's your view on online banking?

Elizabeth: I love online banking.

Michael: Do you do all your banking online?

Elizabeth: Yes, yes.

Michael: Is that a time saver?

Elizabeth: Yes, very much so. How you can use a tickler file if you want to, is I usually use my Outlook calendar for this, but let's say you get a bill. You're in a hurry and drop it in the day you want to pay it online. It'll be there to remind you on that day. So that's a great way to use bills in this, too.

Michael: What kind of websites that you go to are software on your computer that really saves you time? Like I'll give you an example of one that is a miracle to me. It's called "roboform". Have you heard of that?

Elizabeth: No, what's that?

Michael: R-O-B-O-F-O-R-M.com. Every time you have to go to a website and enter a username or password, it does it for you automatically.

Elizabeth: Oh, nice.

Michael: So when you go into your online banking you're typing your username and password, right?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Michael: And when you go into your whatever membership websites or whatever, this roboform you download and you set up your profile in it. Puts it you had roboform on your computer, you went into your online banking. You type your username and password, roboform will remember it. It's secure and everything so you never ever have to type a username and password again.

Elizabeth: Is it safe?

Michael: Oh, yeah. Totally safe. I mean, they've sold millions and millions of downloads.

Elizabeth: Oh, I love it.

Michael: It is the most time-saving tool for people who are on the Internet, going into their AOL account or whatever. Like a bookmark you can click it, boom, it'll go to the site, type in your username and password and get you in automatically. It's an unbelievable little tool. So I'm thinking, are there any kind of tools that you know about like that?

Elizabeth: Well, I use QuickBooks software on my computer. It's not an online thing but that's of course awesome for the money stuff. One that I thought while you were talking, Michael, for a small business owner that I love, have you heard about SendOutCards?

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Michael: I have heard about SendOutCards.

Elizabeth: At first I was like, oh, I don't know. I wasn't sending out cards anyway so I thought well, I'll give it a try. That's cool because you go in and within like three minutes, put in a personal card that thanks you, whatever you want to do and then the company sends it out, stamps it and all you have to do is push the Send on your computer. So that's really cool.

Michael: How about to-do list?

Elizabeth: Oh, I got a great idea for this. Okay, again, simple cost-effective way. I see this to-do list, they get so messy they had to proof the next day. It was a mess and I think some people just do to-do lists just to waste time to just to do to-do lists.

There's one client I had always wrote a to-do list every day and he always wrote, "Go for lunch" on his to-do list because at least he could know he could cross one thing off. I use 3 X 5 cards. They're called index cards. From now on they're going to be called Action Cards in your life.

I get like hot neon colors. When I'm working because it's all about staying focused. When I'm working on something I think, oh, I've got to go to Office Maxx. I need more paper. I pick an action card. I write on that one thought per card. I set aside. I might have maybe ten cards by noon of different things I want to do or think of and so forth.

At noon then I look at the cards, I spread them all over my desk and I say, "Well, what's the most important use of my time right now?" I pick a card and

flip it upside down on the desk. Then I ask, “What’s the second most important use?” Put that card and I’ll put it on top of the first one. I flip, flip, flip. I turn the pack over, on the top of the most important thing I do, I do them in that order.

Now what the fun is when the task is done you can check it into the recycle bin. That’s much more fun than crossing off something on a to-do list and it’s always current. You can prioritize so easily. I love that tip.

Michael: Okay, that’s great. You talk about in Chapter Four of your book, *Organizing with Confidence*, face your fear and do it anyway. How does fear come into all this?

Elizabeth: Fear shows up in here main ways: Perfectionism, procrastination and multi-tasking. Can I give some tips on each one?

Michael: Absolutely, yeah. These are important.

Elizabeth: Perfectionism, that’s your fear of not doing things perfectly or not being good enough, in my opinion. And there is no perfection on this earth so it’s time to give it up. Here’s a great quote I think will help. It really helped me because I mean, recovery perfectionist.

Michael J. Fox said, “I’m careful, not confused. Excellence with perfection. Excellence I can achieve. Perfection is God’s business.”

Michael: Right, that’s good.

Elizabeth: So I’m after excellence. So what I do is I have Two Do Over Rule. Let’s say for example, I write my monthly newsletter. I write in Word. I then go over it two more times to proof it and then I send it to my Virtual Assistant and she makes it all pretty and sends it out.

Michael, I could go over that a hundred times and I would find a typo or a comma or something wrong every time. I call the two do over rule and go on through life.

Procrastination is a fear of “Oh, I can’t get done enough. I don’t know enough to do it.” Procrastination is living life with the brakes on. You’re constantly stopping yourself. So the next time you bring a piece of paper up to your face and kind of look at it and see what you need to do and you feel yourself tempted to put it back on the desk and say to yourself, “Well, you know what? I’ll just do this later.”

When you [33:06.2] fess up to your odds you can see it, then ask yourself this question. “What’s the one next thing I can do? What’s the one next thing? Well, I can call Mary and ask her this question.” Okay, then call Mary. Now

what's the one thing you can do? Now I have to write the report. Great. Do that.

So what's doing is breaking the overwhelming into small, manageable chunks and do this one thing at a time.

And the multi-tasking, now I know that we all for multi-tasking at times, but if you think that you're getting more done more quickly, you are sadly mistaken because the brain can only work on one thing at a time. If you're working on four projects at one time, your brain has got to stop and start, stop and start every time that you go to a different project. It's going to take you actually longer.

So my suggestion is to focus on one thing at a time and focus to me means doing something and thinking about at the same time. We don't do that. We're doing this thinking about that, thinking about this and that and doing this. If you would focus on one thing I can guarantee you that you'd be more productive, and, I can guarantee you if you would change your relationships over night.

When you talk to your eight year old son, you're also looking over at your wife and watching TV and reading the paper, your son does not feel valued. I fell a lot of time on my knees when my kids were little because I'm big on eye contact. I got on my knees and look them in the eye and talk to them. They felt like the most important person in the world.

Michael: Absolutely.

Elizabeth: So, forget the multi-tasking and focus. In fact, a few years ago in the Wall Street there's an article titled *Multi-Tasking Makes You Stupid*. It causes more senior moments at a younger age. I think that's really true.

Michael: Yeah, that's good. You talk about the acronym for SYSTEM. Can you describe that? What is the acronym for SYSTEM you have here?

Elizabeth: It stands for Saving You Stress Time, Energy and Money. I think organization is all about systems. You know, the command center is a system. The action cards are a system. The timer is a system. The roboform, that's a system. The more systems you set up the easier life will be.

Michael: Let's go back to your business. You joined this Association, you started putting on workshops. There were three workshops and then out of those workshops you would get clients, hourly. Then you started packaging your services. Tell me how you slowly got into the speaking business.

Elizabeth: I was getting all these clients and I was realizing – I'm 54 now – since about three or four years ago, I was hurting my back. It's quite a lot of physical work

with the organizing. So I also at the same time started to become a paper pile-up expert. Not only with mom on her kitchen counter but also with business people in their home offices and offices.

Since I really started specializing in home offices and office offices where I could deal with the paper and paper doesn't hurt your back and it's not heavy. I kind of went to that way.

But the same time, the same time, I produced workshops. I was asked to speak at Kiwanis, Rotary, those kinds of things. And then Associations started to find out about me and hired me to come speak. I'm a really great concurrent breakout session speaker. I give you specific tools to go home with and organize your home and your office.

As the more and more I spoke, Michael, the more and more I liked it. The less and less it made me afraid and I found that I was affecting so many more people's lives at one time than the one on one consulting.

Michael: So your first little speech was for that office, for 50 bucks.

Elizabeth: Yeah, the first pay was 50 bucks, yeah.

Michael: Tell me about your second one. Do you remember?

Elizabeth: It was 100 bucks.

Michael: Who was that with?

Elizabeth: Insurance office for the staff.

Michael: Yeah, how long would you speak for?

Elizabeth: Maybe an hour.

Michael: Okay.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Michael: Yeah, one hundred bucks. And then did it keep going up from there?

Elizabeth: Well, I kept it there for a little while and then I think I charged 250 and then 500 and I still charge that in Sioux Falls for an hour Lunch and Learn, but I'm a lot more of course obviously to go and speak to large associations, conferences and so forth.

Michael: What would happen after you did a speech? Would people clamor up at the end of the speech and want to hire you? Would they call you? Tell me how that worked.

Elizabeth: When I was really focused on organizing clients, that's what I promoted and that's what they would ask me about. But, as I started to wean away from the organizing and want more speaking and sign my products I would promote less and less the organizing and promote more and more the products try and do it yourself and/or have me come in and speak to your women's group, your association, your state conference and so forth.

So I really find that when you're a speaker you really have to know what your outcome is of the speech and gear your presentation towards that.

Michael: Along the way since you didn't want to get into trading time for dollars, the labor business of organizing, your back was hurting. And you started developing your own information products based on your subject?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Michael: What was the first product that you developed?

Elizabeth: The first product...I love forms. I put together like a little household forms kit on a CD. That's my first product for like 10 bucks or something. Had that, and then I wrote my book, *Organize With Confidence*, which is a very small pocket book. You can also buy along with that a larger spiral-bound manual where I put all my forms in with the CD and stick them up on your computer.

Michael: So, do you sell the little pocket book?

Elizabeth: Yes, but I try and sell it with the manual because it's a win/win together.

Michael: What does that sell for?

Elizabeth: Fifty bucks.

Michael: Fifty bucks, okay. So you've got a manual with forms and more tools to get you started.

Elizabeth: Right, but now I just revised it. I'm making the book bigger, combined the forms into the book and then putting the CD in the book and I could sell it for 30 bucks instead of 50 because people aren't going to use the forms and the manuals.

Michael: Yeah, how big of a book are you going?

Elizabeth: It's a 5.5 X 8.

Michael: Okay, and you'll be able to get the forms in there.

Elizabeth: Yeah, now there'll be shrunk so that they're not usable but you can see what they look like and then go to the CD. I'm real excited about that.

Michael: Then you'll have the CD in there.

Elizabeth: Yes, sir. Then at a conference I can say they're only \$20.00. Everybody has a \$20 bill on them and they could throw it down. I learned that from some big speaker, James Melnichek. He speaks for colleges a lot and teaches speaking. He says everybody has a \$20 bill. I say, "What's a \$20 bill?"

Michael: Yeah. I like your little pocket book. I like the size of it and it's only about 100 pages. It's very lightweight and easy to mail. How have you liked it?

Elizabeth: Well, I like it and one reason I like it, Michael, is that there are a lot of great organizing books out there but they're big and fat and thick. Some of it's overwhelmed or they just sit down and read a big, fat book? No. So I wrote this small book with little action steps in it.

I really like it and it won't be that much bigger with everything in it but it's just a really handy little book. The chapters are short, like two or three pages and then you go do something because I'm all about taking action. In fact, my organizing class used to call me the "Energizer bunny on steroids" because I'm like okay, let's go, let's go, let's go. Let's change this. Let's clean this up and get the clutter out and file things away and I can't wait until you feel better.

Michael: Yeah, most people get a big, fat book and none of them ever read it. So do you find people read the smaller book?

Elizabeth: Yes, and they can read it in an airplane ride. They can read it in an hour car trip.

Michael: They can put it in their pocket.

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Michael: Did you go through a publisher or did you self-publish?

Elizabeth: Self-publish.

Michael: So how many of these did you print up on your first run?

Elizabeth: I print 200 at a time.

Michael: What do they cost?

Elizabeth: Two dollars and sixty-eight cents apiece.

Michael: That's pretty good.

Elizabeth: My person who publishes for me for prints I'm his favorite. And when you're his favorite, I mean, things happen.

Michael: That's a short run, 200 at a time at about 2 what a piece?

Elizabeth: Two sixty-eight. Now remember, I'm his favorite. He's awesome. I love him.

Michael: Okay, that's great. So other than your book, your CD, have you developed any further products?

Elizabeth: Okay, you're not going to believe this. I just finished my latest prize last night at midnight.

Michael: What was it?

Elizabeth: I'm so excited. It's called The Speak Now and Forever Get New Clients Home Study Program. I speak to a lot of organizers on how to speak and get clients. I thought, you know what? It's the same principle for insurance agent, realtors, chiropractors, whatever. I took that information and it's two audio CDs and then it's a forms CD. I told you there's a lot of forms with my stuff. And then it's a bonus CD I'm getting organized and a bonus DVD where you actually see me give a presentation.

And I can describe everything all in this three-ring binder and it's just beautiful. It's just beautiful. So my sales site will go up in a week and a half and that's my latest thing. I think I'm going to get a lot of speaking, too. You know, like Mary Kay group. People who want more clients but have no money for marketing. Speaking is basically free.

Michael: So, let me ask you. When you were doing your workshops and your speaking engagements, how was your closing ratio on selling your pocket book and the forms?

Elizabeth: It's generally 30 percent.

Michael: If you get 100 people in the audience?

Elizabeth: Yeah, 100 people, 30 will buy.

Michael: That's pretty good.

Elizabeth: You think so? I don't know.

Michael: Thirty percent?

Elizabeth: Yeah.

Michael: So for a hundred people 30 percent will buy your book and your forms CD?

Elizabeth: Yeah. Now I just spoke somewhere, for twenty-four people and twelve bought. So 50 percent. That's huge. I spoke the other night was forty, and twelve bought. Kind of varies in there.

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Michael: So how do you close at the end of your speech for the call to action?

Elizabeth: Before I do my closing to my speech, I have my door prize time. Then I say, "I'm now going to give you 2.5 minute sales presentation." And I will be real up front. I hate when a speaker is selling and act like he's not selling. I'm real clear. I talk about my items I have and then I pass out the order form.

Let's say it's the tickler file, the book and manual and then maybe another filing kit or something. I say, "You can buy these separately. If you buy them all together you get a really special deal." Then I say, "It's the latest special for the ladies. Haven't you ever gone shopping and tried on the skirt, the pants, the jacket and the blouse; the whole suit? If you only bought the blouse and the pants and later you wished you would have bought the whole outfit?" I say, "Ladies, buy the whole outfit." And they come up and they buy the whole outfit, the whole package.

Michael: That's good. So when you speak you get to keep all the money for your sales, right?

Elizabeth: Yes.

Michael: All right. Now when someone books you are you booking all your speeches now through like organizing speaking bureaus?

Elizabeth: I'm not with any bureaus. It's all on my own. I do my own marketing and then when I get a paid gig at a big event, you know, 100 to 200 people, whatever it is. And I always ask the meeting planner may I have a prize table? And some say "yes" and some say "no". i

If they say "yes" then I always get permission up front. May I have a 2.5 minute sales presentation during my talk? I also say, "I do not sell while I talk because many times they know that. You don't just want someone who's just going to sell the whole time."

I give huge content and usually I give this good content and they want to take me home with them. But I always ask things up front and if they say "yes", that's great. If they say "no", that's the right answer, too, because at least I know up front.

Michael: Now I see. How often are you speaking throughout the year?

Elizabeth: Well, not as much as I'd like, Michael. I would say maybe two or three times larger paid gigs. Every seven weeks I give a free workshop in Sioux Falls to women on organizing. I've been doing that for two and a half years very, very religiously. Tomorrow I'm speaking to insurance people. Next I'm going to be

speaking in San Diego over two real estate people, and then some more organizers in Atlanta the following week. So it kind of varies.

Michael: You've got something here about mind mapping.

Elizabeth: Oh...

Michael: Tell me about what is mind mapping and how can that organize my life better?

Elizabeth: Okay. Whenever I'm faced with a big project or I want to write a new book or I'm going to write a speech, whatever, I always mind map because when the thoughts are in your head, they're overwhelming and they drive you crazy...

Michael: You do it on paper or software?

Elizabeth: You can do both. One thing I have in my office is a big whiteboard. I could do it on there. Or could do it on paper or I have the software called Mindjet. It's sold from MindManager.com. It's quite expensive. There's lots of free mind mapping software out there also.

Basically a mind map is a circle in the middle of the paper with lines coming out like rays of the sun. So let's say we're going to work in your office, Michael, and your goal is an organized office. So in this circle you'd write My Organized Office. Then I would have you stand in the doorway to your office and look around your office. Wherever your eye lands on a major area of irritation, you want a main line or branch for that.

For most people they draw a line out and for most people their desk is a disaster so they draw a line out and title that Desk. And then perhaps their file cabinets are a mess. Draw a line out, title it File Cabinets. Maybe the floor is a mess. That would be a line. Then maybe their bookcases. It might be the four main areas.

Then you look at the desk and go, "How can I break this down into even smaller, manageable chunks? I call those baby shoots. Baby shoots that come off the main line. And so from your desk line maybe the Top of Desk is a baby shoot. Then your Desk Drawer is another baby shoot and maybe Under the Desk is a baby shoot.

Then file cabinet, if you have four drawers, it'll be four baby shoots, Drawer One, Drawer Two, Drawer Three, Drawer Four. You go around and you line up your whole office. Then you ask yourself, what do I want to do first, second, third and so forth and you circle those areas and number them.

Then the key is put those prioritizations in your calendar as appointments and do them on those days. So if next Wednesday at 2:00 o'clock to 4:00 o'clock,

Michael, you'll do the top of your desk. That's your appointment and you do it and you handle it and you get it done. And that's how you can break a big project into small manageable chunks.

Michael: Okay. Very good. What are some other good juicy organizing tips? Okay, tell me about the closet. What are some good tips for somebody who's got a messy closet?

Elizabeth: You mean like a clothing closet?

Michael: Yeah.

Elizabeth: Okay. Whenever you organize, you've got to take everything out, else you're cleaning or rearranging. Now people moan and groan when I say this. I say, "Clear off your bed, clear off your floor in your bedroom. Put it somewhere else. That's not our problem today. Now take everything out of your closet. Put all over the floor and the bed."

Then, you know? You will wish you had never heard of me because it's now a real, complete disaster. But I tell people, "Trust me and trust the process." Then you start the START method and the START method is an acronym. The S stands for Sort, T for Toss, A for Appoint to home, R – Restrict to the Container and T – Take back control.

So that's sorting through and you sorted through your tossing stuff. You're putting things into the giveaway and so forth. I tell women if it doesn't fit, it doesn't go back in your closet. They all moan and groan because they go, "But, Elizabeth, it will fit someday." And I say, "Every time you flip by those five pants that don't fit because they're too small, you are feeling bad about yourself, and that's just horrible."

So if you won't give them away, get a pen and mark it "in a year" or something and put that way outside of your closet so you don't look at those clothes every day. So you're sorting and tossing. When you're done with that, what's left then out from that closet is you've done the A. You've appointed a home and you can put them back in the closet which is restrict to container. A closet container is a hangar. You hang everything back, by category. You know, blouses, skirts, T-shirts, pants and so forth.

And inside the category, by color, light to dark; whites, blues, browns, blacks and so forth. Then you look in this closet and you go, "Oh, my goodness. This looks fantastic." You've taken back control and you feel really, really good.

Michael: That's great. I'm just thinking in my home some things that really take up a lot of time and I'm thinking the kitchen. That was a great idea about preparing your meals a week ahead of time. I'll tell you, with my kids there's one thing

that my kids are constantly asking for, and I don't have a refrigerator where they can go get water and push the thing and get it themselves, because ice is a pie. [48:11.4]

I was thinking for parents with kids because they always say, "Water, please". "Can I have some ice water?" You've got to constantly get up and go get the ice and go get them ice water all the time, every day, two or three times a day. I'll tell you, having one of those refrigerators where they can get the ice and the water themselves is a big time saver.

Elizabeth: Put a jug of water in the fridge on a low shelf. They don't need ice.

Michael: That's a good idea. Then they can get themselves.

Elizabeth: Exactly.

Michael: Yeah, I'm doing that. Any other tips in the kitchen?

Elizabeth: Oh, work out of centers. By centers I mean like-items together. Next time you cook, you wise cooks, watch if you walk around a lot while you're cooking and baking, even if you're not working out of centers. So one center is your baking center. All your flour, sugar, spices, mixing bowls are all together in one spot. Of course, all your plates, cups in one spot.

When you work out of centers you'll save a lot of time. And then also in your pantry do the same thing. Take everything out and really go through all this food and I like those clear, the brand is sterilized but at Target they're two box size end. I put those in. The plastic goes in one. All the Kool-Aid can go in one. You label them and if your pantry looks so nice it's so easy to put things away.

Michael: Yeah, that's nice. So tell me, my listeners who want to know about how to get your book, how to get this new speaking product you were talking about, and before you tell me how I want you to tell me a little bit more about what's on this forms CD and how one can benefit from it; you know, the organizing forms.

Elizabeth: The forms in there helps you organize your home and/or your office. There's great ones with the great Meeting Team Agenda form [49:44.5], which I love which keeps people on track of meetings. There's a Reminder Form that will help you stay focused while you work and then you've got a Filter Reminder Form to put in your tickler file later.

It's a great grocery list/menu planner. They can plan ahead for a week and go once a week to the store and get stuff. There's all kinds of great forms to tell you how to use it. The instructions are in there. This is all great.

Michael: Okay. Where can my visitors learn more about you?

Elizabeth: ElizabethHagen.com. E-L-I-Z-A-B-E-T-H-H-A-G-E-N.com

Michael: What are you using to manage all your emails and stuff?

Elizabeth: Constant Contact, where I send my newsletter out. And then one shopping cart is My Shopping Cart.

Michael: That's good. What's Constant Contact charge you?

Elizabeth: I think it's \$79 a month. My VA liked that so much better than One Shopping Cart for the newsletter part so I just use that. Plus I can go in by myself because of all the templates and the little promos ones by myself.

Michael: So how often do you mail into your list?

Elizabeth: It's a twice a month newsletter and then I usually hit them not more than two more for a promo but probably three times a month, but sometimes more. I try and be careful about that.

Michael: You mentioned you have an assistant and there's a lot of small businesses operating online who are trying to do everything themselves. Tell me how using an assistant can organize your life better? Can we do everything all ourselves?

Elizabeth: I wish we could, but we can't. We're going to kill ourselves. So it's important to realize the things that you do that you either aren't all that good at or you don't like doing and make a list of those and then find people who can do it for you.

For example, something I do right now is log database entry. I shouldn't be doing that. If I value my time at \$175 an hour, I could be paying someone \$10.00 an hour to do the database entry. It's a no-brainer. So we've got to think about things that I'm wasting my time at.

While I'm doing that database entry I should much better be going after some speaking events that I can make thousands and thousands of dollars at and not doing these things that make me no money.

My Virtual Assistant is really more of a graphic web person so anything to do with my newsletter. She can copy to a website, you know, like that. I know nothing about and I don't want to learn, and that all goes to her.

Michael: Well, this has been great.

Elizabeth: Thank you so much, Michael.

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Michael: Okay, take care. Bye.

Elizabeth: Okay, bye.

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