



## Calming chaos behind the garage door

An entire industry has literally sprung out of closets - the cleaning and organizing of them - but Andrew Wojtczak suggests the home's biggest storage space has been mostly ignored.

BY THE GAZETTE (MONTREAL) JANUARY 3, 2007



An entire industry has literally sprung out of closets - the cleaning and organizing of them - but Andrew Wojtczak suggests the home's biggest storage space has been mostly ignored.

"The garage is usually 25 per cent (of the surface space) of a house, and the last thing on people's minds is: 'Let's organize the garage,'" said the 24-year-old founder of Garage Outfitters.

"I know there's a market for it because my research and tests driving by homes with open garage doors showed evidence of abundant clutter as the norm," Wojtczak said.

"Given the market potential of what was previously considered a general hobby convinced me to start up this business, which recognizes the family garage for maximum space and utilization."

The Herzing Institute business graduate does have one major target clientele, however.

Although Wojtczak's services are available to everyone, he said: "I'm going after professionals with no time to organize garages themselves and owners of higher-end homes."

He's targeting people like Dave Wilken, a Royal Bank of Canada department manager whose wife and friends marked his 50th birthday by giving him a garage makeover last month. Wojtczak was hired to do the job.

Wilken was impressed by what Wojtczak did with "25 years of junk I'd collected," and even admitted the experience was fun.

"It should be easier to keep up, because there's a place for everything now," Wilken said.

"It's organized as opposed to chaotic the way it was before."

Calling the transformation "amazing," he said he was surprised by the variety of tools at Wojtczak's disposal to keep items off the floor and out of the way.

"I didn't know there were so many storage gadgets," Wilken said, referring to equipment like wall organizers, storage cabinets, shelving and overhead storage.

"My wife and kids had been on my back to clean up the garage," Wilken acknowledged, "and sometimes it takes a third person, not family (to initiate action)."

He learned that part of the process is throwing things away.

Wojtczak assists by asking his customers whether there's anything in their garage they haven't used in the past six months, then whether they want to store it or throw it out.

As a main distributor/dealer of Racor Inc., he uses top-of-the-line home-storage products manufactured by the Indiana-based industry leader.

Rather than charge on an hourly basis, Wojtczak has a fee structure of \$9 to \$11 a square foot, based on an assessment of the job. A big project takes him about one day and a smaller one half a day.

Of the nine garages he's completed since starting in September, the average cost has been around \$1,000.

An advertisement he placed in the November edition of Reno Decor magazine generated more than 125 calls. Wojtczak also has been getting contracts through word of mouth.

"When I'm not busy, I go to realtors and construction sites passing out my business card," he added.

It's almost to the point where he'll have to hire staff to help. There are three contracts to complete and another 10 jobs are pending for the beginning of the new year.

"It is a relatively fresh market (in Quebec)," according to

Wojtczak, whose service includes sweeping, vacuuming and painting as part of the cleanup.

"It's a new trend and slow to catch on, but once it's done, (customers) love it," noted Wayne Schneider, owner of Canadian Garage Outfitters, in Kitchener, Ont., which is not affiliated with Wojtczak's business.

"People want everything from getting their garage cleaned up to get their car back in, to making it a beautiful place to live in as well," Schneider said, noting his fees range from \$500 to \$5,000.

There are other companies across the country, such as Comatec Inc. in Toronto, Garage Outfitters Canada in Winnipeg and Garage Strategies Inc. in Edmonton, that also offer organizing equipment and installations, but not the actual cleanup.

Garage Strategies has been selling and installing a complete array of organizing equipment for the past three years, "but our guys won't clean out the garage," salesman Al Gourley said in a telephone interview.

"I have a more customized, individual approach," Wojtczak stressed. "I make sure the customer is happy and not just another client we sell (equipment) to and put it up."

For further information, call (514) 779-6696 or email [garage\\_outfitters@hotmail.com](mailto:garage_outfitters@hotmail.com)

[mking@thegazette.canwest.com](mailto:mking@thegazette.canwest.com)

© (c) CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc.