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Just about everyone has a space in their kitchen they refer to as "the junk drawer". This is where neat, sensible people keep tape and paperclips and the spare keys to their neighbors' homes. And then there are the rest of us, who stuff this drawer with unruly mountains of whatever we don't know what to do with - dead batteries, lanyards and take-out menus from restaurants that closed six years ago. The fact is, a lot of us just don't have the time (or talent) to keep our homes organized and clean.

Chappaqua resident Bal Agrawal was counting on this when he quit his job to launch LifeWorx - a one-year old company that provides "staff on call" for people who don't have full-time staff but need some help in their households. This kind of need is all too familiar to Agrawal, whose wife died of cancer 12 years ago, leaving him to raise their young son alone. With his family in India, it was especially hard for Agrawal to have a demanding career and get all those household chores and errands done.

His goal now is to provide high-quality help to other families with a team of professionals who will clean your house, organize, cook your meals or run your errands. Agrawal sometimes tests workers out in his own home, saying "if they're not good enough to work in my house I won't hire them to work in other people's".

It wouldn't be surprising if he needed some help during this busy past year... a few months after founding LifeWorx he became the President of United Way of Northern Westchester.

Q. What made you decide to leave your job and start this business?

A. I feel that service businesses are so poorly managed in this country. When you have someone come into your home and perform a service for you, it's hit or miss - you may get a good person or not. I had a housekeeper once who stole all my silverware! There's no reason for it to be like that.

Q. What are some of the strangest requests you've gotten?

A. Somebody called us once about a parrot that talks a lot and gets lonely when the family goes away - they wanted somebody for the bird to talk to while they traveled. And there was one guy who

had 80 suits - half of his apartment was taken up with closets. He wanted us to come in and organize so he could make space for more suits.

Q. You're sending strangers into people's homes. How do you know they can be trusted?

A. We do a very detailed background check. We check references, check for criminal records, we check driving records. We give each person a very thorough interview and we have a strict code of conduct - we tell employees " do what you say and say what you do." If one of our employees breaks something, they'll leave a note saying that they broke it. It's all based on honesty and trust.

Q. So your employees don't snoop in people's medicine cabinets?

A. I don't believe so.

Q. Generally, are people in Chappaqua easy to work for, or are they high-strung, overly demanding types?

A. Most of my clients are professionals and they expect the same kind of professionalism from me. They are amazing, interesting people; I could sit for hours and talk to them. They are looking for quality work. I wouldn't call them high-strung I think they're home proud, family-proud people. Not bohemians.

Q. There's an interesting symmetry between your career and volunteer work - they're both about serving the community.

A. I came from a foreign country - serving the community in my business and volunteer efforts is my way of establishing my roots here. ... myself in this country - myself and my son. Now I think of my community as my family. It's a very comforting place to be.

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