



Going Paperless In The Workplace

BusinessWeek published an article in 1975 predicting that paper use in the office would start to decline by 1980 and by 1990 it would almost disappear. But, paper use in the U.S. has actually increased by 400%, 40 years later. Revenues of U.S. paper producers are higher today than they were in 2011. In the past 20 years, usage of paper products in the U.S. has gone up 126% to 208 million tons annually. There has been very little progress made of going paperless in the workplace. Much of this growth can be attributed to environmental campaigns that favor the use of paper over plastic, the fact remains that the average office worker still uses 10,000 sheets of paper each year, or a stack about 3 ½ feet tall.

Why go paperless?

1. Productivity

This is the most compelling benefit of going paperless in the workplace. Electronic documents are instantly and simultaneously available to everyone who needs them. That means fewer handoffs, less time lost in transit, reduced waiting times and less risk of loss or damage. Going electronic also offers the potential of rethinking workflows to save even more time and it improves teamwork because multiple people can work on documents at the same time.

2. Cost savings

Those 10,000 sheets of paper each office worker uses cost more than \$500. Multiply that by all the people in your workplace and add in the cost of printers, copiers, toner, fax machines and other devices that can be all but eliminated. The numbers get a little frightening. Then add on the cost of filing cabinets and people to maintain them. The Paperless Project estimates that every 12 filing cabinets require one full-time employee to maintain them. Now consider that the information in those 12 cabinets can today be stored in a device that fits in the palm of your hand. That's one reason AIIM (Association for Information & Image Management) says the ROI of going paperless is usually counted in months.

3. Accessibility

Employees in paper-intensive businesses spend up to 40% of their time looking for documents, and 7% of documents are lost or misfiled. Multiply that by your payroll and compare it to the cost of that document imaging system you passed on last year because it was so expensive. And lost work time doesn't account for the many related soft costs, such as processing delays, customer frustration and postage. Compare the ease of a Google search to the chore of visiting a library to find information. That's the difference electronic processing makes. Digital access is also cheaper.

4. Security

This might seem an odd benefit to mention considering the frequency of recent cyberattacks, but electronic documents are more secure than printed ones. For one thing, digital records can be rendered unreadable through encryption. They can also be secured against printing, copying and sharing. Access controls can specify viewing privileges to a fine level of granularity. Audit trails reveal who accessed what documents and when. In contrast, printed documents are only as secure as their proximity to a copy machine.

5. Customer Satisfaction

Imagine how much happier your time-pressed customers will be when you can satisfy their requests in seconds instead of hours, or when you can send copies of the documents they request instantly via email instead of by express courier.

Source: Iron Mountain, 5 Benefits Of Going Paperless In The Workplace