

BOULDER COUNTY BUSINESS REPORT

'Paperless' looks good on paper; Follow these tips to make it work

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Author: K.J. McCorry

Everyone is talking about the "paperless" trend happening in America, when in fact, it is just the opposite. America's consumption of paper has doubled in the last 10 years - a period that marks the rise of computers as essential office tools.

U.S. paper producers consume approximately 1 billion trees every year. This amounts to roughly about 735 pounds of paper annually for every American office worker. Further, paper is the No. 1 material that we throw away in our landfills. For every 100 pounds of trash we throw away, 35 pounds is paper. According to the paper industry, it expects that paper consumption will double by 2050. Clearly, we are not in a paperless trend.

In addition to the environmental impacts, paper is time consuming to manage. Record keeping constitutes more than 90 percent of all office activity. Although we are in the computer age it is surprising how much paper we still print and file. Recent studies say of that paper filed, more than 80 percent is never referenced again.

To begin to create that paperless office, we all need to reduce our paper consumption and change our habits of printing. Here are some ways that you can reduce paper consumption in your office.

Use recycled paper

A ton of paper made from recycled fibers vs. virgin fibers uses 7,000 gallons of water, 17 to 31 trees, 4,000 kilowatt hours of electricity and 60 pounds of air pollutants. Sustainable stock paper uses half the trees of normal stock paper. With tree-free paper alternatives the production itself is more environmental, requiring fewer chemicals and energy. Ask your purchasing manager to switch to one of these virgin paper alternatives for your office.

Encourage scanning

When a document isn't received in electronic form, instead of making multiple copies of documents (that invariably sit on people's desks or get discarded) consider scanning in documents and then e-mail copies. Many of the scanners/printers automatically will convert a scanned document into an e-mail.

Reorganize your hard drive

Managing electronic data is much easier and less time consuming than managing paper.

To move toward a paperless organization system, you need to have basic knowledge and control over your electronic data. Take the time and reorganize and purge your hard drive and e-mail files. You will be more apt to find and access documents you need electronically and less prone to print.

Request e-documents

Often our colleagues will put in our desktop 'in box' a hard copy of a document. This is sometimes based out of habit or simply they think their colleague might be more apt to read it. Ask your colleagues to send you all information via e-mail, and then you can determine if you need to print it or not. Many of the statements and information we receive from vendors can be received electronically. Check your Web site account, and see if there is an electronic statement option available.

Get off mailing lists

Take the time or ask your office assistant to remove your name off marketing lists at work. Contact the source directly via e-mail, and ask to be removed from the paper mailing list. If you would still like to receive the information then request to be put on their e-mail list.

Use Xerox GreenPrint software

Xerox has GreenPrint software for its solid ink printers, which analyzes each page of every document sent to the printer and looks for waste characteristics (e.g. pages with just a URL, banner ad, logo, or legal jargon) and then highlights and removes them. GreenPrint says using the software could save the average office more than \$90 and 1,400 wasted pages per year. To get an idea of your printers overall environmental impact and use the Xerox Sustainability Calculator visit www.consulting.xerox.com/flash/thoughleaders/suscalc/xeroxCalc.html.

Print on both sides

Many of the printers today offer an internal function to print on both sides of the paper. Check with your printer manual or information technology consultant and see if you have this option.

Reuse one-sided paper

Provide a location in your copy room and your office for paper that can be reused on the other blank side. Employees can use this paper as scrap paper or as 'test' prints for documents before the final version is finished.

K.J. McCorry is chief executive of Officiency Enterprises, consulting services that help offices become more productive, efficient and sustainable with resources and time. She is the author of "Organize Your Work Day In No Time," released by Que Publishing. She can be reached at www.officiency.com.