4 Reasons Your Office Isn't Paperless Yet

The way it's always been...

Most employees are accustomed to paper clutter. To them, the paper stacks from faxes, invoices, bills, legal documents, memos and manuals are normal aspects of the business world. It's not a broken system in their eyes.

The paper files might seem innocuous but by overlooking the technology available to better manage your files and processes, they cut into the productivity, efficiency and profitability of the company. Each piece of paper needs to be managed, read, filed, retrieved, entered into software and disposed of. While it may be status quo, these can no longer be considered best practices. It begs the question: why?

1 Everyone is set in their ways

You could argue that there is a culture built around the paper. To take that paper away would mean a change in business practices, social norms and habits that would take almost everyone out of their comfort zone. People don't like to be disrupted from what they know. So, many companies that could benefit from paperless offices are still tied to printing, copying and filing.

To combat this, employees, managers and resistant staff need to be made more aware of the benefits. Sharing with staff that a paperless environment will make it easier to locate information, search files, retrieve documents and manage workloads will surely get their attention. It's also helpful to leverage systems that are easy to use and can work with a multitude of document types and software programs. This provides necessary familiarity and makes the change seem less scary. It also makes it less of a hassle to manage documents electronically.

2 It costs money

When considering costs, you have to take into account your current costs of doing business. Each 4-drawer filing cabinet takes up valuable space in your office – to the tune of about $1500 per year, per cabinet. With paper use comes the loss of productivity (it takes the an average of 18 minutes to locate one document), knowledge (in a paper-based environment, 70% of knowledge is lost when an employee leaves), and costs associated with losing documents. Some of these costs, like loss of reputation, are difficult to measure, others are more straightforward.

Using electronic document management can save tremendously on productivity costs by making document location easier and by automating redundant processes that involve documents. It can improve your compliance by automatically monitoring due dates and notifying management of needed documents that have yet to be received. The investment has immediate returns for your business as well as long term gains, and all make it worth that initial investment. Plus, you can do it in stages.

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3 Paralysis by analysis

Conceptually, it sounds like a great idea to convert paper files into an electronic content management system. Once you start looking at the details, it can be overwhelming and lead to this phenomenon where big projects wind up in the backwater of company priorities, despite the clear benefits they provide. Once you start considering the potential disruption to business, questioning the security of your documents, and looking at the overwhelming workload in making the switch, going paperless can easily get put on a shelf for "future consideration".

The good news is that good electronic content management providers will do the bulk of the conversion for you, implement the system in stages to avoid interrupting your business operations and provide ample training so that everyone knows how to maximize their efficiency right out of the gate. And your documents will be safe.

> **"20% to 40% of a worker's time is wasted searching for documents." – Coopers & Lybrand**

4 All-or-nothing thinking

After businesses invest a lot of time and energy in the discovery process and realize that an investment in time and financial resources will be needed, there is often a stall. With all the licenses they'll need and the amount of sheets they need to convert – the picture looks too big and the return on investment too far into the future. This is born out of the assumption that they have to implement a paperless office all at once – which is inaccurate.

Moving towards a paperless office environment can start in one department. For the most impact, select a department that has a lot of paperwork, redundant paper-based processes and a high need to access files. Two great examples: Human Resources and Accounts Payable. You can implement these departments in phases as well. For example, you can start with active files, then move on to adding a workflow and then get to scanning in those inactive files. Once the benefits are realized in transitioning one segment, that all-or-nothing thinking quickly takes a seat.

They're all misconceptions

Change threatens the status quo. Some people will always want the form and feel of paper, some might resist the perceived learning curve, and others might be territorial about their data. Fortunately, going paperless simply reduces your volume of paper. It does not mean that your office will never use a shred of paper again.

Many of the barriers to removing paper boil down to misconceptions. Despite the resistance, when you compare the business and cultural barriers against the need for improved efficiency and reduced operating costs, the value and ROI of a paperless office is as straightforward as they come. All you need to do is to take the next step.

Milner specializes in providing document imaging and workflow solutions and services to help companies reduce the volume of paper and dramatically improve efficiency and productivity. From onsite scanning to customized software integrations, we offer everything you need to make "going paperless" a reality for your organization. Contact us at 800-875-5042 for a free demo.

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