

## The Paperless Business — Are You There Yet?

The move to dramatically reduce the use of paper in this country started out as an environmental issue. Eliminating paper is part of our country's efforts to "go green." It's a noble and worthy goal.

However, there's also a positive benefit to your business in going paperless -- it saves money. The costs of using paper include much more than just the cost of paper itself. They start with the equipment we purchase just for the purpose of generating and distributing paper documents.

Plus, there are the costs that don't appear on an expense spreadsheet that affect the bottom line nonetheless. Here are just a few of the costs related to using paper in your business:

1. Buying paper, folders and binders
2. Buying and maintaining filing cabinets (which take space that could be used more productively)
3. Purchasing printers and print cartridges
4. Time involved in purchasing equipment, paper and print cartridges
5. Purchasing and maintaining copiers and fax machines
6. Spending time with technical support when printers jam or malfunction
7. Copying, distributing and locating paper documents
8. Losing customers and revenue if important documents are lost

Are you ready to start saving money by going paperless? Here are a few tips that can help:

### **Send and receive faxes electronically.**

Scanning in paper documents and saving them in a PDF format not only makes those documents faxable from your PC, smartphone or tablet, but allows you to store the documents electronically. Electronic documents are faster and easier to locate and retrieve -- saving time and boosting productivity. Having faxes delivered to your email inbox keeps them electronic and eliminates the use of paper for sending and receiving.

### **Use email and phone calls to enhance customer service and support.**

Email, of course, has virtually eliminated letter writing. Because emails can be archived, they leave a trail of communication that might be important in resolving customer issues or legal matters. In many businesses, however, much communication is still done by voice. Most of today's IP-based phone systems make a documented record of voice mails received, which further enhances record keeping. Having the ability to receive emails and voice messages on your PC, tablet or smart phone ensures prompt responses to customer inquiries.

### **Email invoices to clients and customers.**

The cost of printing and mailing invoices adds up fast. Electronic invoicing not only saves paper and postage, but it automatically makes the invoice an electronic document that can quickly and easily be stored and retrieved.

### **Pay bills electronically.**

Most banks allow you to pay electronically as well. Online banking eliminates the need to receive and file paper invoices. Plus, your bank keeps accurate records of all transactions so you can retrieve them at any time, if needed.

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**Implement a document management system.**

Handling and managing important documents related to the operation of your business is far easier to do electronically. Document management systems abound, so you should easily find one that fits your needs. Some of them are even free. Many document management solutions are cloud based. This eliminates the need to keep critical business files on local computers or servers. This helps keep them secure, yet easy to retrieve.

With the ability to "e-sign," now there's less of a need to generate paper -- even for many contracts and legal documents.

Going paperless is easy to do and it's good for your business. You save money, time and space, and trees in the process.