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Towards a greener way of working

Amy Wright of Storetec argues that the environment should be at the core of document management decisions

For years we have been warned about the potentially catastrophic consequences of global warming, but taken little action. A key question we must ask ourselves is, are our paper processing activities costing the earth? To an extent, the answer is yes.

It's easy to forget that our everyday activities including sorting mail, filing paperwork and printing contracts are fuelled by deforestation, which is significantly contributing to global warming. These everyday activities may seem minimal to individual office workers but astoundingly, this amounts to an average of 10,000 sheets of paper used per office worker, per year, across the UK.

The survey conducted by research firm Loudhouse also found that as many as 6,800 out of the 10,000 sheets of paper used are wasted (Greenbiz, 2010). Whether you work in the private or public sector, within a SME or large business, we are inundated with paper

documentation on a daily basis. Some industries do operate with a greater reliance on paper than others, an example being the healthcare industry.

Hospitals and surgeries often store patient files which, particularly for surgeries, is frequently accessed following consultations. In a digital era with advanced document management systems, there is no need for office workers to continue working with an outdated reliance on paper.

The Coronavirus pandemic has demonstrated how quickly businesses can adapt to a new working culture, so the simple transition from paper documents to an electronic archive should be easy to implement within organisations.

WHY NOW?

In October 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued an urgent report suggesting that the world is completely off-track and

heading towards a rise of 3 degrees C which will have significant and dangerous impacts on the world. We used to think if we could keep warming below two degrees this century, then the changes we would experience would be manageable. Not any more. This new study says that going past 1.5 degrees C is dicing with the planet's liveability. And the 1.5 degree temperature "guard rail" could be exceeded by 2030 (BBC, 2018).

As you will know, global warming is caused by human activities such as burning fossil fuels and farming which produces high levels of CO₂. Forestation plays an important part in regulating the climate as trees and plants absorb carbon dioxide from the air and release oxygen. With the pace of deforestation increasing, we face the fact that the climate cannot be properly regulated as well as the concern that further logging causes trees to release the carbon stored into the atmosphere. The transportation of the paper product from trees only

"IT IS POSSIBLE TO BOOST EFFICIENCY AND BE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY AT THE SAME TIME: DIGITAL ACCESS TO BUSINESS-CRITICAL RECORDS NOT ONLY HELPS YOUR ORGANISATION BECOME ECO-FRIENDLY BUT CAN DRAMATICALLY INCREASE WORKPLACE EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY. DID YOU KNOW IT CAN TAKE WORKERS AS LONG AS 15 MINUTES TO LOCATE A SINGLE DOCUMENT (M-FILES, 2018)? THIS ADDS UP TO ALMOST 60 WASTED HOURS A YEAR, PER EMPLOYEE! AND THIS ISN'T TO SAY THAT THE EMPLOYEE IS ONLY GOING TO SEARCH FOR ONE DOCUMENT PER DAY."

adds to the problem as in order to transport the product, fuel is burned which contributes to the ever-increasing levels of CO2.

Did you know that 4 billion trees are cut down each year to make paper?

WHAT ACTION CAN YOU TAKE?

Businesses across the globe have a corporate responsibility to review and change their internal processes to help in the campaign to reduce global warming. Some organisations have already implemented schemes to become eco-friendly. IKEA now sources 50% of its wood from sustainable foresters and is working towards a goal of powering all stores by 100% renewable energy. But for smaller organisations, there are simple, yet effective actions businesses can take to boost 'eco credentials' and become paper-lite:

- Rather than print documents, digitally access the information you need using a secure document management system such as FreeDocs.
- Utilise workflow capabilities such as e-signing, which carries the same weight as physical signatures but reduces the paper used. FreeDocs contains a host of workflow capabilities such as digital signatures.
- If you do need to print any documents, ensure the paper waste

is recycled. If you don't have the time, why not outsource the destruction service to Storetec?

- Scan your paper archive into a digital format for ongoing access and to back up your records... and then remember to recycle the old paper copies!
- Finally, think twice before you click print!

IT CAN BE DONE

It is possible to boost efficiency and be environmentally friendly at the same time: digital access to business-critical records not only helps your organisation become eco-friendly but can dramatically increase workplace efficiency and productivity. Did you know it can take workers as long as 15 minutes to locate a single document (M-Files, 2018)? This adds up to almost 60 wasted hours a year, per employee! And this isn't to say that the employee is only going to search for one document per day. The results from this study are astonishing and show how cash and resources are wasted in organisations due to unorganised paper filing systems.

Rather than simply outsourcing your paper archive to be scanned, why not integrate a cloud-based document system into your everyday operations? Awarded Compliance Product of the Year 2020 at last year's DM Awards, FreeDocs has vast security and search capabilities which means office workers

can access documents quicker than ever before. FreeDocs has the capability to search through 238 million records in just 4 seconds.

On the whole, businesses of any size who make the most of outsourced document scanning services and document management systems will see huge internal benefits as well as corporate achievements of becoming sustainable and eco-efficient.

REVIEW YOUR ARCHIVE TODAY

It is high time we changed our habits in order to expect a more sustainable future for generations to come. If you have a spare hour today, why not have a quick review of those documents stored on your desk and ask yourself, can I access these documents online instead?

Awarded BPO/Outsourcing/Bureau Business of the Year in 2020, Storetec can assist your business in the seamless transition to paperless working. We understand that businesses are legally obliged to retain certain records. We can work with you to review your archive and decide on the documentation which must be retained and what can be destroyed and recycled.

If you're concerned about your corporate responsibility to reduce paper waste and transition to a digital archive, please do not hesitate to contact Storetec today.

More info: www.storetec.net

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