



STORAGE & DESTRUCTION

How Small Businesses Can Beat Paper: Store It



Karen Schwartz April 23, 2018

It's not uncommon for small businesses to be drowning in paper — between the paper invoices, contracts, warranty information, legal documents and more, it's normal for things to pile up. Despite a move by some businesses to beat paper, paper remains the bane of the small office. Consider these statistics: There is a 400% increase in paper use today versus 40 years ago, and office workers use an average of 10,000 paper sheets per year, according to [Statistic Brain](#). Not to mention, the average document is copied 10 times.

Paper is a drag on resources and productivity, especially for small businesses with relatively few employees. Yet, there are good ways to beat paper: Scan it when you have to retain it, store it more efficiently when you have to keep it and shred it when you don't need it any longer.

Here are some reasons why small businesses simply must find a way to beat paper:

It's hard to find specific documents when you need them.

Whether it's gathering documents for tax filing, preparing for audits or simply helping customers, finding documents quickly is critical to efficiency and productivity. Searching through file cabinets for the right document can take a lot of time, and if the document is misfiled or lost, hours and even days can be lost with nothing to show for the time spent.

It's much harder to share paper-based documents. Sharing paper documents means waiting for other employees, making sure you get the documents back when they are finished and inevitably doing more copying than you should.

It's environmentally unfriendly. It takes one tree to make 8,333 sheets of paper. That's more than one tree per office worker per year. And it causes more trash: According to Statistic Brain, 45% of printed office paper ends up in the trash by the end of the day.

It causes businesses to retain documents for far too long.

While it's important to follow the local and federal rules for retaining documents, there is always a point after which you can dispose of them. By keeping them too long, businesses are wasting space and, more importantly, subjecting themselves to a higher risk of privacy and data breaches. When it's time to dispose of documents, shredding is a good option. Not only does it protect confidential information, it saves money because you no longer have to manage that information.

It's not secure. Retaining paper documents onsite is much riskier than retaining documents in electronic form. Whether it's a mistake caused by a document left on a printer or a malicious attempt to steal information, the threat is real. Identity theft is on the rise. And, according to a report from the [University of Texas at Austin](#), more than half of identity theft instances do not begin with the exploitation of cybervulnerabilities. These incidents are often caused by thieves exploiting information on paper documents. To ensure that your documents don't fall victim to identity theft, refrain from throwing them in the dumpster or a regular recycling bin. Make sure to securely store or shred these files, instead.

There are many routes businesses can take to beat paper, from shredding and scanning to offsite storage. Shredding documents is an effective and safe way to reduce the amount of paper you must store. It's ideal for documents that

are no longer needed, especially those including sensitive information. When looking for a secure shredding service, make sure it is certified by the National Association for Information Destruction and complies with all applicable federal, state and industry regulations.

For documents that must be retained, [choosing a digital solution](#), such as document imaging, is a good option. The right provider can scan your documents and host your digital records in a secure repository. This method allows businesses to ensure that documents are accessible only to authorized users. It enables these users to search for, retrieve and share information they need at any time, on any device, from any location. One good choice is [Image on Demand](#), which allows you to scan and gain access to the specific documents you need at the time you need them. This pay-as-you-go approach is an economical way to start going digital for less.

Finally, for documents that simply must be kept in paper form, consider moving files offsite to a secure storage location. When evaluating providers, make sure that the facility where documents will be stored is fully secure and protected against fire and environmental conditions. Ideally, the provider should also have a proven method of tagging, classifying and tracking documents.

Beating the paper jungle may take a little work in the beginning, but the benefits far outweigh the work involved. When it's a matter of productivity, efficiency, security and the bottom line, it's worth the effort.

Tags: [beat paper](#)



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