

# CREATING A PAPERLESS OFFICE



# Creating a Paperless Office

The many benefits associated with making the digital switch



The idea of the paperless office was first posited in 1980 - the decade of personal computers, brick-sized mobile phones and the Sinclair C5. Although some of these technologies have since thrived, others have been consigned to the annals of history. The concept of going entirely paperless has, until now, not been forthcoming, but as companies start to realise the benefits associated with going digital, we are finally seeing a dream become reality.

## Paper: unnecessary waste

But that's about to change. The profligacy of cloud computing, coupled with efficient document scanning technologies, means it's easier and more affordable than ever for companies to turn their pile of musty archive boxes into accessible, reliable, legible and easily managed data. And more businesses than ever are turning to the cloud, including leading government departments such as HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

However, recent Economist data revealed that the average office worker in the UK still burns their way through 4.48 trees<sup>1</sup> worth of paper each year. And paper doesn't just come at a heavy burden to the environment: as well as the cost of actually buying in paper, ink and printing out documents, there's the further cost of hiring workers to maintain paper records and the overheads that come from filling a room with 20-year-old invoices and other assorted flotsam.

For many companies, the prospect of going paperless can be daunting. It brings to mind images of an office where post-it notes are outlawed, where surfaces are spare, where you can barely move for tangles of high-speed network cable. But in reality, such a change can actually streamline your workflow and unearth big data you didn't even know you had, improving your business position and efficiency. And by choosing the right document scanning partner, migrating your data to the cloud - and, crucially, storing and managing it effectively - needn't be scary.

## ii. Migrating paper documents to the cloud (without the headache)

*"To really become paperless, you have to stop paper entering the office in the first place"*

Damien Andrews, Dajon Data Management

According to recent Cloud Industry Forum (CFI) data<sup>2</sup>, the number of companies using cloud-based services such as document scanning and storage was up 27 per cent between 2011 and 2012, and it's easy to see why. The main advantages of going paperless are clear:

- 1. Easier.** It's easier to locate old files from an electronic archive than an old, crushed box — so your company's productivity improves as less time is wasted searching through the old records.
- 2. More secure.** Off-site document storage is maintained and managed by online security experts, meaning hardware and software firewalls are kept right up-to-date and access is restricted on terms you set. That means no more lost USB sticks, no more CD-ROMs left on trains, and a reduced risk of an actual, real-world break-in costing your company data.
- 3. Cheaper.** Finding space for 4.48 trees' worth of documents per employee per year can be a logistical nightmare, and the costs that are associated with storage as well as the extra staff needed to maintain such a system can soon spiral. Rather than sitting on that data, instead scan it and store it in the cloud — freeing up space and reducing costs.

**4. Environmentally friendly.** Reducing paper means reducing paper consumption. As soon as a record can be accessed digitally, the original sheet of A4 it came from doesn't need photocopying, mislaying or printing out again. Plus, you can pulp all those old records down into mush, which can then be recycled into new paper for less digitally-savvy offices to keep using.

But it's not just about scanning and storing a whole heap of documents. The main advantage of going paperless is the beneficial impact such a move will immediately have on your company's workflow. Having quick access to files when a client or customer is on the end of the phone speeds up customer service; having an accurate system in place to scan and enter data minimises the potential number of errors that come with human data entry workers. And tasks such as invoice processing and adopting a digital mail room can even be outsourced, freeing up more staff time in your departments. All of these small-scale improvements snowball to accelerate your entire company's workflow and improve almost every aspect of your business.

Digital data is more secure and easier to access



## A quick word on... Big Data

Big data is one of the key buzzwords of 2012, and it means pretty much exactly what it sounds like: a databank that is so big and unwieldy that it becomes difficult to process, store and manage. Because of the nature of converting years of old data from paper to electronic records, having big data to deal with can be a necessary side-effect of going paperless.

But that doesn't have to be a bad thing. Choosing the right document management service means you'll have access to powerful software - such as the Dajon Platform - that allows you to sift through, organise and process all that raw data. You might find info you never knew existed. You might find a huge invoice you forgot to pay. Either way, with the right handling, big data can improve your company's efficiency and workflow.

## Big Data, big numbers

**2.7 Zettabytes** of data exist in the digital universe<sup>3</sup>

**5 Exabytes** of global data is generated every 48 hours

The human genome took ten years to process - today's technology can do the job in a week<sup>4</sup>

### iii. Key considerations before undergoing document scanning

***"Going paperless is a process."***

— Shelley Borsheim, International Association of Business Organising<sup>5</sup>

It's easier than ever to opt-in for electronic-only receipts, invoices and statements from businesses that have



already hopped aboard the paperless train. But for some firms, going without paper just isn't realistic, facing challenges from sector-specific regulations and reluctant staff - so there are a few factors to consider first.

***"One of the biggest challenges is figuring out what to do with your existing paper,"*** says eBridge Solutions' Stephanie Jones. ***"Is it critical for you to have it stored digitally—do you face record retention requirements, for example? Or could you just start going paperless from a certain day forward? Getting your employees to buy into the process and help decide where and when to get rid of the paperwork is key to your success."***

Another important consideration is the timeframe of your conversion to paperless, something many companies impose with a deadline of six to nine months. That gives sufficient time to scan documents, train staff on best practice to reduce paper consumption (don't print e-mails,

Make the digital switch and eliminate manual searching



Create a central online archive for all of your data

don't make unnecessary photocopies) and migrate your data to the cloud. Within a year, you can be entirely without paper.

But possibly the most important thing to consider is your Plan B. So many companies cling on to paper because, well, they can - it's solid and tangible, and gives companies the feeling that if something goes wrong, there will always be a paper-shaped pillow to fall back on.

Did you know? The average incidence of data loss costs companies £2,454 in both the value of the data lost as well as the cost of technical services spent attempting to recover it.<sup>6</sup>

This is why companies such as Dajon have such rigid back-up solutions in place. Migrating to the cloud can be daunting, especially when businesses are handing sensitive data over to a third-party. But by uploading to the cloud, it means your data is securely hosted across a

number of different servers, meaning if one goes down, the rest can take the strain, keeping your data accessible and intact. Regular back-ups made by your document management provider will ensure data loss will be kept at a minimum even in the case of a major catastrophe. In most cases, it's safer than storing it yourself.

#### **iv. Finding the right partner to facilitate the shift**

***"Concentrate on business development not business administration."***

— Damien Andrews, Dajon Data Management

Obviously, you're free to roll up your shirt sleeves, tuck your tie safely inside your vest and get digging through archives yourself in a bid to scan, shred and go paperless. But the point of going paperless is not to get bogged down in paper, so it makes sense to outsource your data migration to someone else while you focus on what's important: your business.

That's what makes choosing the right partner so crucial. They not only need to discretely handle and migrate your data to the cloud - they also need to have ironclad security measures in place to avoid any data corruption or access issues, as well as have a sleek front-end data management service so you can access your newly digital data more easily.

For further information about how to turn your workplace into a paperless office, contact Dajon Data Management . With more than ten years' experience in providing specialist scanning and records management services to clients, Dajon can help give your business the competitive edge needed to thrive in today's tough economic climate.

#### **Sources**

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