How to go paperless and prevent document mismanagement

TECH 4 BIZ

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In recent years, there has been a big change in the way we receive and send information. Most documents that traditionally started out as a paper copy are now being transmitted electronically.

Even though the trend is changing, I do not believe paper will go away all together. People will still print out documents when received, as they are still accustomed to paper. As touch displays and related monitor technology improves, this will become less of an issue. Going paperless has been a goal of companies for many years. However, the benefits behind the goals have shifted to document management and workflows.

In any company, workers produce documents every day, which typically reside on individuals' desktops or in file servers. One estimate holds that employees currently spend up to 40 percent of their time looking for and dealing with this tsunami of information. This time spent on searching, sorting, creating and re-creating redundant documents account for millions of dollars of wasted hours in the U.S. alone.

Now that bills, invoices and other documents are being received electronically, the goal is no longer just scanning paper to avoid the space of file cabinets, but to organize these documents in a manner to quickly find, secure, route and retain as appropriate within the business. When documents are received as e-mails, most companies do not have a way to route them electronically or an organized place to store them.

Although a paperless office might seem difficult to achieve, document management software solutions make it easy for an organization to quickly move to a "less paper" system of working.

BENEFITS OF GOING PAPERLESS

If you are looking to switch to a paperless office, your organization can benefit in several ways, including:

- **Efficiency.** No time lost filing and retrieving documents.
- **Collaboration.** Share your documents with others in your organization quickly and easily.
- **Remote access.** Access important documents remotely.
- **Security.** Provide controlled access to your documents.
- **Savings.** Reclaim space used to store documents and eliminate off-site warehousing.
- **Compliance.** Comply with regulations such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.
- **Disaster recovery.** Ensure business continuity by protecting documents from disasters.
- **Simplification.** A single mechanism manages both electronic and paper documents.
- **Environmental benefits.** Reduced usage of and dependency on paper results in fewer trees being destroyed and a decrease in pollution levels in the atmosphere.

MAKING THE MOVE TO PAPERLESS

A powerful document management software solution can help you capture, create, file, search and retrieve documents. It also helps you file, secure, archive and distribute the documents; and design and manage workflows.

A complete document management system comprises six basic elements:

- **Scanning.** Advancements in technology make conversion fast, inexpensive and easy.
- **Storage.** A storage system provides reliable storage for documents. A good system accommodates changing documents, growing volumes and advancing technology.
- **Indexing.** This creates an organized filing system and makes retrieval simple and efficient. A good system will make existing procedures and systems more effective.
- **Retrieval.** The retrieval system uses information to find images stored in the system. A good system will make finding it fast and easy.
- **Access.** Document viewing should be readily available, with the flexibility to control access to system. A good access system will make documents viewable to authorized staff, whether in the office, at different locations or over the Internet.
- **Workflow and approval.** Routing documents through an electronic approval process allows for tighter controls and better response times, and eliminates paper costs.

In a volatile economy, now's the time to stop wasting valuable resources, time and money on inefficiencies created by clutter and disorganization – and go paperless.

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