

3 Ways the Paperless Office Aids Information Governance



As far back as 1975, a writer for Business Week predicted the paperless office. While the vision of a PC on every desk came true, paper use in offices around the world continues to climb. In fact, recent estimates suggest that the average office worker in the United States uses 10,000 sheets of paper a year. Much of that paper winds up in the trash within hours.

Even more importantly, endless paper files leave sensitive information difficult to locate, organize and secure. In an age increasingly dominated by concerns about [data privacy](#) and security, paper presents a significant liability.

With advances in information technology, now is the perfect time for businesses to revisit the benefits of the paperless office. While savings in paper, copiers and filing time improve the budget, the key benefits lie in [information governance](#). These include increased security and regulatory compliance, as well as improved collaboration and information access.

1. Boost Security and Compliance

Paper documents have a habit of walking out the door in someone's briefcase, or finding their way to the shredder. A sensitive document left on the conference room table can result in the leak of important information. And in the event of legal action, it can prove difficult to certify that privileged information has remained under strict controls.

On the other hand, digital document management systems include security measures specifically designed for today's privacy-conscious environment. These features monitor and record document access, including an audit trail of any changes, printing or copying of sensitive files. Additionally, organizations can automate retention policies.

For example, administrators can define folder and document access by document type, as well as user job description. This allows restriction of access to only those employees who need access to a document to accomplish their jobs. Organizations can also more easily redact highly confidential information.



2. Improve Collaboration

More efficient document organization facilitates knowledge transfer and collaboration among employees. With digital file sharing, an employee can instantly share files with team members in another office. No more waiting for inter-office mail. And with electronic signatures, forms can be delivered, signed, returned and filed in a matter of minutes instead of days.

With tools such as [Office 365](#), team members collaborate on documents and presentations in real-time. And because they store and work with documents in the cloud, users know that they have the most current version of a shared file.

3. Streamline Information Access

For many organizations, moving to a paperless office coincides with [cloud migration](#). This means that employees have remote access to necessary files 24/7. Think of the central repository as a digital filing cabinet, well-organized and accessible from anywhere. But the digital file cabinet offers search capabilities exponentially superior to its metal cousin.

For instance, with paper files, an account representative might thumb through multiple filing locations to gather all relevant information on a customer. With a digital document management system, a single search can include multiple document types from multiple departments.

These powerful search capabilities prove particularly useful in the event that legal action mandates an eDiscovery. A well-organized document management system makes data collection quick and easy, accelerating early case assessment.



Paperless Office Best Practices

Moving to a paperless office requires careful planning in order to harness the benefits of security, compliance, collaboration and access. With input from major stakeholders, determine the processes and policies up front. For instance, what documents will go digital? Where will you store them? How will you organize them, and what naming conventions will you use?

Then, choose the right tools for the job, from a digital document management system to scanners and the software needed to access and view files. Pay particular attention to implementing solid security and backup procedures. With a plan and the proper tools, you are ready to achieve results.

The information governance experts at Messaging Architects can help your organization choose and implement the solutions that work best for your business needs. From records management to [ePolicy review](#) and eDiscovery, we help you organize and secure vital information assets.