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How to reduce paper consumption in your office (and save money at the same time!)

There are many easy ways for businesses and organizations to reduce their paper use and costs. Reductions of 20 percent or more are possible in most offices. Here are practical tips to help your company implement a cost-saving, paper reduction program:

1) Think before you print

- It is simply too easy to push the print-button. For example, much paper is wasted by printing out single line emails or printing out unnecessary copies of documents.
- Departments should carefully assess their needs before ordering bulk print copies of information materials, like annual reports or brochures. In many cases hundreds if not thousands of un-used copies end up in storage rooms clogging up storage space.

The golden rule of saving paper: Think twice if you really need to print – if it is necessary to print make sure you print on both sides (duplex). This is a really easy way to reduce paper consumption by half.

Easy ways to reduce wasteful paper use:

a) Post in-house reminders near the copy machine or at individual desktops.

- Use catchy slogans, for example: “Do you really need to print that?” or “Do you know how many sheets of paper you used last month?”
- WWF has created some eye-catching posters with such messages. Download at www.panda.org/savepaper

b) Track the personal printing footprint in your office

- Create systems that allow staff to measure how many print copies they are personally responsible for each month. Most people are shocked to find out their individual cumulative number of copies. This knowledge will motivate people to reduce their personal paper footprint.

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- By tracking individual printing quantities, staff will be able to measure changes over time. One way to promote less printing is by running in-house competitions for “Paper Saving Champion” of the month – i.e. who printed the least copies.

c) Reduce print runs

- Undergo an inventory to identify past printing jobs for which too many copies were ordered. This will help ensure that the quantity ordered matches demand for printing jobs in the future.
- Publicize the results of your inventory in-house, for example on your office notice board or in your company newsletter, and encourage people to be more mindful of the number of copies ordered.

Create a checklist for those departments which order informational materials. The checklist should include question such as:

- Please identify the target group for the brochure. Verify the number of required recipients and the number of back-up copies needed.
- Are you sure these target groups will need a hard copy of the report or is it enough to point them to a website?
- Do they need to be proactively sent the hard copy or is it sufficient to make it available upon request?
- Do you need in-house copies for all staff or can copies be held in communal areas/on notice boards?
- How many reserve copies do you require and why - for what events or purposes?
- Who will distribute or oversee the distribution of the reserve copies?

Simply by addressing these questions, it is highly likely that the quantity of future print runs will be more realistic.

d) Review distribution lists frequently.

- Eliminate outdated or unnecessary recipients.
- See if destinations with many recipients can make do with fewer copies.

e) Conduct paper-less meetings

- When you hold a meeting, do you really need to have hard copies of preparatory materials available for each participant?
- Encourage people to use their computers for reviewing documents and note-making

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- Make sure meeting participants have electronic access to all the materials beforehand – encourage those using computers not to print out copies. If you must supply additional materials at the meeting, consider burning CDs for all participants.
- Make copies “as needed” rather than in large batches at one time. Frequently, extra copies of important internal documents become outdated quickly and only end up being discarded. Making copies as needed can reduce this problem significantly.

2) Use paper more efficiently

Duplexing, i.e. copying images onto both sides of a sheet of paper, can save up to 50% of paper costs. Duplexing saves money on paper purchasing, as well as on storage and mailing. Duplex copies are also easier to fold and staple. While some prints and copies need to be single-sided, most do not.

a) Set defaults on computers

- Set defaults to double sided - select one-sided printing only when really needed.
- Print double-sided for bills, applications, licenses, and other paper-intensive activities.
- For help how to set default settings see <http://support.microsoft.com/?kbid=230743>
- If your printer cannot double-side then find out whether your printer can be fitted with a duplexing unit to enable it to print double sided.

b) Change your computer’s default settings so that you can put more text on each page.

- In MS Word, go to File, then to Page Setup. Then choose Reduce the Margins and set your margins to smaller numbers. Compared to the normal settings, you could use up to 14% less paper!
- When you are printing, reduce font size to 10 point to decrease the amount of paper required.

c) Post in-house reminders about efficient paper use near the copy machine and/or each workstation

- Use both sides of the sheet of paper, whether for copying or printing.
- Print only the pages you need by using the “Print Selection’ function.
- Print documents 2-UP OR 4-UP per page for archival purposes and where possible. Customized software can increase the document-per-page capabilities of your printer.
- Reduce margins.

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- Use the print preview function before printing any word or excel document to avoid copy-mistakes.
- Use a small font size to reduce the number of pages printed
- Use efficient fonts like Times New Roman or Arial –these fonts use significantly less space. See: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/assistance/HA010347461033.aspx>

d) Use your fax effectively:

- Send a fax or word document without printing first! Simply use the menus in Word: choose File, then Send to, then Fax recipient, and then follow the instructions. This allows faxes to be sent from computers without the need to print first. Also allows faxes to be received in an e mail rather than printed copy format. Help on this should be available from your IT department or from this link : www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/setup/learnmore/crawford_02october21.msp
- When sending a paper fax, eliminate cover sheets and use fax stick-on labels instead.
- Program your fax to eliminate confirmation sheets

e) Practice Image Reduction

The ability to reduce or enlarge images is common on copiers. Image reduction is also possible with printing.

- For example, when copying a book, one can often get two original pages on to one side of the copied sheet. Because reduction works in two dimensions, you only need to reduce by 30% (to 70%) to cut in half the area of an image.
- While reproducing entire standard pages requires a 35% reduction (to 65%), books often have smaller than standard pages and most documents have larger than necessary margins, so the reduction can usually be less than this.

f) Practice Preventive Copier Maintenance.

- Keep copiers and printers in good repair and make it your company's policy to only buy copiers and printers that make reliable double-sided copies.
- Let your copier maintenance person know when a copier is performing poorly (toner is low, jams frequently, etc.). Regular copier maintenance is important, especially if the toner is low. Many times copiers are used until all the toner is gone and that wears down machines. A copier that works well is less likely to jam and this helps save paper!

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3) Use thinner paper

The thickness of paper we use makes a big difference both in terms of cost as well as the amount of paper used. You can find the reference to the thickness of paper on the package, mostly ranging from 60 gsm or g/m² (grams per square meter) to 100 gsm.

a) Use lower grammage paper for your printing, copying etc.

Obviously heavier weight sheets use more fiber, cost more per sheet and cost more to post. Most printers work well with 70 and 80 gsm. Using thinner paper most often does not change the performance and can save money for you too.

Paper with a basis weight of

- 60gsm uses and costs 20% more than 50gsm;
- 70gsm uses and costs 15% more than 60gsm;
- 80gsm uses and costs 12% more than 70gsm;
- 100gsm uses and costs 20% more than 80gsm.

4) Reduce unwanted mail to your office

Contact mail senders to take your company's name off their mailing lists, or mark unwanted first class mail "Refused, Return to Sender." For more information, see Reducing Unsolicited Mail at Your Business. <http://www.webofcreation.org/BuildingGrounds/Forests-paper%20and%20wood.htm>

For country specific way to reduce unsolicited mail, type « unsolicited mail » into a Google search.

5) Reuse paper

a) Put adequate paper collection systems in place

- Provide clearly labeled recycling bins near copiers, shipping and receiving areas, and in employee eating areas to collect white paper, mixed paper, newspaper, magazines, cardboard as well as non-paper products (glass, aluminum, plastic, etc).
- Provide desktop recycling containers for employees.
- Advise your cleaning staff on where to place collected paper without polluting it through contact with other waste

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- Estimate how much waste paper your office produces and arrange to have it picked up by your waste hauler or a recycler.
- If your office is small, consider combining your recyclables with other small offices nearby.

b) Encourage staff to reuse papers

- Use the blank sides of unneeded single-sided copies for printing drafts.
- Use outdated letterhead for in-house memos.
- Designate a printer for draft printing, and use only used paper in its paper tray.

c) Don't buy paper that is a contaminant in recycling

- Don't buy paper that have the following contaminants: thermal fax paper, glossy/plastic coatings, plastic windows, bright colours including goldenrod, laser printer inks, adhesive products.

6) Use less paper by effectively using computers and other technology

Today's information and communication technologies provide many opportunities for businesses to function with far less paper. Electronic mail, Intranets, Internet and document scanners can radically reduce paper use, while also saving time and money. Estimates show that **10-30% reduction in paper usage is possible** with appropriate use of available technology¹

Examples for how to use your computer to eliminate paper:

- Use electronic means to communicate with customers, for press release/media relations
- Use e-mail instead of memos and faxes for inter-office memos, announcing meetings, and targeted communications. Use group e-mail lists to "broadcast" important messages efficiently and inexpensively.
- For editing and reviewing of larger documents, transfer documents on disk or by e-mail rather than sending a printed copy.
- Use electronic communications for directories, forms, bulletins, manuals, reports, and storage when possible (don't print them unless absolutely necessary);
- Develop an Internet web page for frequently requested information.

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- Store documents in electronic archives using data compression software. This saves on filing cabinets and floor space
- Employ office intranet solutions that allow open or password-protected access to important documents, presentations, or databases
- Use electronic data interchange (EDI) technologies like web-based secure credit card transfers and order forms to reduce the need for cumbersome paper invoices, transaction records, and confirmation letters
- Use Revision Features in Word Processing Software. Take advantage of onscreen editing features when making changes to draft documents, then send the new draft electronically.
- Have several people edit the same copy of a document using different colored inks, or edit computer documents on-screen using different fonts, or learn to use the commentary function in word. See <http://support.microsoft.com/kb/305216>.

Special paper saving features in Microsoft Excel

- Use the Fit to Page feature in Microsoft Excel: This feature automatically re-scales output to print evenly on one or several pages. Let's assume you have a spreadsheet that's 10 columns wide, but when you used Print Preview it shows that nine columns will be printed on one page and one column on the next page. Sounds like a reformatting nightmare, but there is a simple solution:
- Just use the Fit to Page feature. From the File Menu, select Page Setup, then select Scaling-Fit to. You can force the document to print out on a single page or multiple pages in a specific width or length. Excel takes care of all the scaling for you. You can then use the Print Preview feature to make sure the document prints on just one page. You may also want to change the paper orientation (portrait vs. landscape) for large spreadsheets to get more columns on a page.

Special paper saving features Microsoft PowerPoint

- In PowerPoint, print Handouts not Slides. Text in PowerPoint is generally large, so if you print using the Slides option, it will print one slide per page. If you need to make overheads, that is the way to go, but otherwise, the best and fastest way is to print Handouts. The default setting prints 6 pages/handouts. If you need more detail for a given slide, such as an important graphic, you can print that particular page individually.
- For example if a lecture has 60 slides, printing handouts will save 83% of the amount of paper, and it will print 6 times faster!
- Printing it in duplex as well would save 92% of the paper.²

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7) Use better information systems

Often paper related costs are closely related to the organization of information in an office. Great savings are possible when a company thinks through its information management. For example, companies can save money by

a) centralizing files, reducing distribution lists and consolidating forms

b) routing Memos and Newsletters.

- If it is inappropriate to communicate a message by e mail, instead of making a copy for each person, route one copy around the office.
- Ask originators to send fewer copies to your office.
- Provide half-size sheets for short memos and letters.

c) Using two-way envelopes

This saves paper, inventory, warehousing, handling, printing and labelling costs. Print directly on envelopes rather than using labels.

1 <http://rreuse.org/24/doc/00029>

2 <http://www.udel.edu/topics/printless/Reformat.html>

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