

Editorial Extract

Extracted From Paperless Ponderings
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Serious Records Management

SUBJECT	IMAGING V PAPER – Who's winning
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An interesting question that has been on the minds of thousands for at least the last decade. [Moore's Law](#), tells us that the cost of computer storage will halve every 18 months while the capacity doubles. Indeed we can now purchase computer storage which is less expensive per page, than the cost of paper. But the major problem exists in getting the page to the computer store without additional cost. Enter the major cost component of any filing system – labour.

The labour component of maintenance cost of any conventional filing system is around 80%, but the same is also true of any system that captures the physical document to image, such as the use of Microfilm or CD'. Surprisingly, these costs not associated with the content of the item to be imaged, but in how the paper is presented to the scanner. Hence most of the costs reflects the labour afforded to (a) sorting (b) removing staples and (c) taking the folds out of the paper so it will go through the machine.

However, commerce has become such that many transactions do not need to create paper. For example, the [ATO](#) now permits companies to keep electronic records as long as the record can be read in the future.

But what do I do with reports etc? I hear you ask.

The aim is to produce an electronic copy of what would be printed and store that in a computer in a format that can be reproduced.

What format do I use?

Look now at you standard MYOB accounting system – it is upgraded on average each 6 months and every couple of years, there is need for complete data transfer (usually a result of ATO changes) due to more information being retained in its database. If you just keep the data, the regulation requires that you also keep the program and the operating system that it was working on, so that the transaction can be reproduced.

What is the solution then?

Though not a simple answer, one that seems to be winning at the present moment is the production of all reports to an [Adobe](#) PDF file that you keep in the same way you would have produced a printer report in the past. The PDF Writer appears as another printer when you are about to print a report. The only difference is the writer prints the report to a Portable Document Format (PDF) that is viewable on almost every machine or operating system in the world. So print the report, print the list, print the letter, print the book – but print it twice (a) once to the paper for the people who want it NOW and (b) to the Acrobat printer to create the PDF and then keep the electronic version in your cheap storage.

So What Do We Do With The Paper?

We have to be game and either destroy it once it has been used or get right into the new era - and not even print the thing in the first place.

The verdict

Paper is still ruling the day. In fact statistics from last year show that, despite the obvious advantages of Moore's Law, the total usage of A4 copy paper increased rather than decreased, due to the fact that too many people are printing things out.

To achieve the paperless office, first disconnect the printer