

The 3 E's of Office Paper Reduction: Economical, Environmental, Efficient

Has your “paper-less” office become a forest of filing cabinets, and yet you still can't find the one report you need for that meeting in 5 minutes?

Printing and writing paper equals about one-half of U.S. paper production. The United States alone, which has less than 5% of the world's population, consumes 30% of the world's paper. Over 40% of wood pulp goes toward the production of paper.

By taking a few small steps, we can help reduce the impact of paper on our forests, increase our efficiency at work, and save money. Who knows – we might even be able to find that report and make it to that meeting on time.

Economical: Saving paper saves money



You're probably thinking, “What's the big deal, my office doesn't spend much on paper.” But what most people don't realize is that the cost of buying paper is just the tip of the paper iceberg. For each sheet of paper used, a company incurs not only purchasing costs, but also storage, copying, printing, postage, disposal, and recycling – and it adds up. A recent Minnesota study estimates that associated paper costs could be as much as 31 times the purchasing costs (not including labor). So, that ream of paper that you paid \$5 for really could cost up to \$155!

Citigroup, a large financial services organization, and Environmental Defense recently reported that if every Citigroup employee used double-sided copying to conserve just one sheet of paper each week, the company would save an estimated \$700,000 each year. Bank of America cut its paper consumption by 25% in two years by increasing the use of on-line forms and reports, e-mail, double-sided copying, and lighter-weight paper.

Environmental: Saving paper use reduces our impact



Creating paper from trees requires a lot of natural resources. Paper is an office necessity and is needed to complete essential tasks, but there are ways that we can help by reducing the amount of paper that we consume. Even with recycling efforts, paper makes up a significant portion of Minnesota's garbage – close to 30%. We're throwing away a lot of resources.

Efficient: Saving paper increases efficiency



Paperwork! It brings to mind filling out unnecessarily complicated forms. Electronic forms can now make that job easier and more efficient. Businesses that have converted to electronic forms and filing systems have found that it takes less time to both find and process information. This doesn't mean that electronic forms should replace all paper. In some instances, paper will be the best tool, but most businesses find that reducing their paper use increases their efficiency. Whenever we have fewer sheets of paper in our homes and offices, we spend less time looking for those that are misplaced or lost.



Use both sides

When you use the front and back of a piece of paper, you can cut your paper use and costs in half.

- Set computer defaults to print double-sided.
- Make double-sided copies when possible.
- Use one-sided paper in your fax machine or as scratch paper.



This is a common graphic that copiers use to indicate their duplex mode.

Tips for reducing office paper

Think before you print or copy

Sometimes it is necessary for documents to be printed. Try to print responsibly.

- Preview documents before printing. Using the print preview allows you to proofread your document for errors before you print. Always use the spell/grammar tool to help avoid errors that can cause documents to be reprinted.
- Print only the pages you need. If only a few pages of the document are needed, print only those pages instead of the whole report. Most software programs provide this option under the print function.
- Promote a “think before you copy” attitude. Consider sharing some documents with co-workers. Print only the number of copies needed for the meeting, don’t make extras.



Be nice to your copier and your copier will be nice to you. Keep copiers and printers in good repair and make it 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!

Go electronic

- Route memos and newsletters that employees should see, but do not need to keep. That way newsletters and other documents can be shared.
- Use revision features in word processing software. You can edit draft documents on screen instead of printing out drafts and making hand-written comments.
- Send information electronically. Use e-mails instead of fax or letters when possible. It’s faster.
- Print more words on each page (e.g., smaller font, narrower margins). Change the default on your computer to reduce the margins a little or to use an efficient font like Times New Roman.
- Create an electronic filing system for quick, easy retrieval.



Compound savings

Think about that 10-page, single-sided report you’re dropping in the mail. You need an extra stamp, don’t you? Take that same report and send it double-sided. Now you’ve cut your paper cost in half, and you don’t need to pay the extra postage.

Keep forms and lists up-to-date

- Reduce unwanted mail. Visit www.reduce.org for tips on how.
- Eliminate unnecessary forms. Figure out if all forms are still used, sometimes documents become obsolete and are no longer needed. If forms are still needed consider making forms electronic.

Close the loop on recycling

- Recycle all of your office paper. If your office doesn’t recycle yet, start a recycling office paper program. It can save your organization money and reduce your waste.
- Buy recycled content paper, and paper that is made without chlorine.



Great resources

A comprehensive tool kit designed to provide employees with office paper reduction tips is now available. Included is an e-mail communications series, video, posters, and more. For information, visit www.reduce.org or call 651-215-0232 (1-800-877-6300 in greater Minnesota).

