

Is There Such A Thing As A Paperless Office

By Bob Brolhorst

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You've heard it before, the phrase "Going Paperless. It's an ideal, but why not strive for less paper, you'll be surprised how much room you'll save, and how much more organized you'll be, not to mention the time you will save yourself. I went from having a four drawer filled to the the point of overflowing to one drawer that is easily accessible.

The IRS requires that you have original documentation to back up your tax deductions. Until they accept scanned documents as originals, we're stuck with the paper. At the end of each year, clear out the accounts payable files by removing the actual files, placing them in a nice records storage box, label both ends and sides of the box with the "Year-Tax Records," put the lid on the box, and tuck it away where you can get to it for the next seven years. Then set up new accounts payable files for the new year.

Secondly, most courts require the original documents on which signatures appear when defending or presenting a case in court. Therefore, you'll need to keep your customers files in their original form, but only those with signatures. The rest of the paper can be scanned.

I receive a great amount of e-mails, newsletters, and magazines. Do I keep all of them? No. I read the e-mail and move it to the appropriate e-mail folder, arranged by subject, client, or Trash. If the e-mail is something to be saved as a resource, it goes into the two appropriate files, one goes into a file in my email software program and the other I save on a CD that I store in a fireproof safe.

The paperless office may not be realistic while the courts and IRS need to see the originals, but you can reduce the amount of paper you have to keep by scanning and backing up on two different media in case one goes bad.

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