

THE GREEN PAGES

You, too, can save a tree: recycle paper in your office



BY RUTH HEIL
Business Journal
Columnist

There was one tree at my childhood home that I always loved to climb. I dreamed of my future while clinging to its branches, daring myself to venture higher and higher. I never imagined the number of trees my career would come to consume.

Why do we use so much paper? Could it be a product of our global-sized communication; a result of our own productivity; or should we blame our laws, regulations, and mandates? No matter what the reason, there is no denying that offices consume forests of paper. In fact, estimates suggest that it takes 24 trees to make one pallet of non-recycled office paper.

Recycling and forest plantations have reduced our thirst for virgin hardwood. America recovered 56 percent of 2007's consumed paper. Congratulations, America. But recycling doesn't help unless we actually buy recycled paper. For some, the additional cost is not an option.

An ecology professor named Nalini Nadkarni used NASA's satellite photos to estimate that there are currently 61 trees for every person on earth. In my lifetime, I'll need every one of those for building, heating, shading, breathing, and all sorts of other important things. Although it may cost less than a penny to buy a sheet of paper, I can't begin to put a price tag on my 61 trees.

Furthermore, the toxic process of pulp and papermaking renders frivolous paper use downright sinful. Any office, regardless of size, workload, or financial condition, can use the following paper-saving techniques:

1. Know how to cancel a print job. Nearly every printer has an option to cancel printing. Make sure everyone knows how to react when the machine starts spitting out unexpected pages.

2. Circulate PDFs. Microsoft may have won the office document production race, but Adobe Acrobat beats all when it comes to electronically circulating those documents. PDFs have become so universal even my Uncle Harry knows what they are. But

does everyone in your office know how to create a PDF? Do they know how to name the file? Can they find the darn thing inside the computer after it's been created? It is as easy to learn as climbing a tree; you just have to dare to go higher.

3. Change reporting habits. We are creatures of habit. But if a human can quit a nicotine addiction, she can start using both sides of the page. Encourage and generate two-sided documents. Again, this might require stretching up to the next limb of print and copier how-to knowledge. Also, learn how to say, "I will e-mail it to you" instead of "I will fax it to you" or "I'll print out."

4. Collect and reuse. The thought of using both sides of each piece of paper has probably crossed all of our minds. Let's put those thoughts into action. Collect lightly used sheets for scrap paper, and keep it in the printer or copier's optional tray.

Communicate to everyone what that tray is now for. Put a sign on the drawer, "place used side face up." If you don't have an optional drawer, put a collection in-bin next to the machine, garnished with the same kind of sign.

5. Get to know your print options and page setup screens. There are many paper-saving features here. Use the print preview option to ensure extra pages won't be generated. Know how to reduce the image to fit on one page. Be able to select a print range to get only the pages you want. If you're printing a temporary working document that will be thrown away, know how to select the scrap paper tray.

6. Develop a regular, trusted computer backup. If we trust that our electronic documents will be there in the morning, we are less likely to create tangible copies. Computer backups are just as important for protecting trees as they are for business viability.

Other measures

There are numerous other paper-saving measures that large offices can take. These include electronic document management systems, electronic inventory control software, and upgrading to (and using) Adobe Acrobat Standard. Find the solutions that work best for you.

It is true that a computer screen can never

adequately replace all paper. Paper is gentler on the eyes, easier to scribble on, and often better for communication. Equally so, and obvious to the child perched on a favorite branch, squandering should never replace prudence.

Ruth Heil is a professional writer and office-management consultant at Streamline Organizational Services in Green Lane. Send her your clever paper-saving techniques by e-mailing Info@Streamline-OS.com.

The Perfect Gift for the Businessperson Who Has (almost) Everything!

A Subscription to the *Eastern Pennsylvania Business Journal*.

A SPECIAL HOLIDAY OFFER*
ONLY \$46 FOR 50 ISSUES.

Please send a Business Journal Gift Subscription to the following:

Name of Friend: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Gift Card To Read From:

My Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Bill me please! Check for \$46 enclosed (make payable to EPBJ, LLC)

Or, charge to my VISA Mastercard AmEx Discover

Acct.# _____ Exp. Date _____ Code _____

Signature _____