

Achieving a paperless office essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Could we achieve a PaperLESS Office? Acknowledgements I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following for giving me invaluable information and support whilst doing my investigations for this project. This project is concerned with investigating and evaluating the Human Resources Department of an Isle of Man Shipping Company, their current systems for maintaining records relating to seafarers certification. To generate possible ways of reducing the level of paper handled.

To draw conclusions from the investigations and make recommendations taking into account the possible need to train staff and the cost implications My role is working within the Human Resources Department . Within the modern world of business there is an ever-increasing need for organizations to be more efficient. The current systems we use at present to maintain seafarers certification are that of paper format kept in cabinets around the office, this has resulted in the office being cramped and not working as efficiently as it could.

I feel that paper documents are anything but fast and effective. Whilst keeping paper data may sound like the right answer to store personnel data in reality for some information it simply cannot be done. Information will continue to be lost, misplaced, wrongly filed or damaged. The Human Resources Department is responsible for managing personnel information, data and process. Ensuring the business is compliant with employment legislation.. Handled, and to bring improvements to my working environment.

A function that is efficient, cost effective, merits regulatory compliance, prevents the loss of data and assisting the organization in meeting its responsibilities. To achieve this aim I need to identify the amount of paper usage generated at present, by accomplishing these aims the Human Resources Department would be able to provide a higher level of efficiency. The primary rationale motivating such a widespread use is to enable a more responsive use of data handling which could lead to greater flexibility.

I need to investigate a way to gain control over data handling without significantly increasing costs to the business. The Present Situation The problems experienced at my workplace, is with regards to the current system for maintaining personnel records. At present all data is stored as paper format in filing cabinets around the office. After initial research I have identified potential problems with this way of data handling.

Certificates can be misplaced, lost or incorrectly filed All the paper data could be a potential fire hazard In the event of a fire personnel data could be destroyed Data Protection – At present unauthorized personnel can source information of others. Storage problems- the office has many bulky filing cupboards Cost of photocopying personnel data Time wasting looking for data that has been stored at random Investigation I gathered the information for my project from speaking to various companies on the Isle of Man, my IT manager and also the Internet.

However having looked at Google suppliers trying to market their product. So can it be possible to reduce the level of paper handle in my office? After my initial investigations I have learned, that paper still indeed plays an

integral role in today's modern society. As my title states, what we have to remember that when people say Paperless Office they don't mean remove the need for paper completely. The emphasis is paperless – less paper – not no paper at all. In our office it would be nearly be impossible to remove paper completely.

To find solutions to the problem of the level of paper handled I had to establish criteria of essential and non-essential documentation, this would then enable me to find an efficient system as you can see in (Appendices 1). We don't need to store every piece of information, which arrives into the office. Paper is thought to be a major contributor of industrial pollution, each year 300 million tons of paper is produced globally. With that in mind I feel that there is a need to develop a more suitable way of capturing data whilst reducing the level of paper handled.

Paper based data handling does have its good points and is a tangible entity, data can be auctioned, indexed and put into an archive box and sent off to storage. However we are dealing with seafarer's certification, which are required by maritime authorities to be readily available for inspection, it would not be feasible to store them offsite. You can destroy paper data safely in the knowledge that we have acted within the current boundaries of the record keeping legislation. However whilst paper based records appear to be a manageable task it is not as simple as it sounds.

Trying to keep pace with the glut of records generated by our organization each year is staggering. However, while using paper has low overhead costs, its long term costs add up significantly compared to using for example

electronic. The cost of handling data can account for up to 30% of a company's overheads. This percentage is attributed to the average number of hours that workers spend on document related tasks, including filing, distributing, creating, retrieving with the average document being copied up to a staggering 15 times.

I analysed the amount of paper handled in my department (see appendices 2) over a four-week period and as you can see from the pie chart a erroneous amount of paper is handled and the cost (see appendices 3) can add up significantly. As with all companies we are subject to increasing regulations on how to store, use and manage the information we have. The company has this not only for Legal Obligations but also for the ability to gain insurance. We have to retain our records for seven years, so there is a need to develop and maintain an appropriate up to date regulations could be exceptionally costly.

So what would the advantages be to reduce the level of paper handled?

Environmental – We could use less paper/ be kinder to the Environment

Stationary Cost – Less Printing/ Photocopying – saves paper Time – More

Efficient workplace/ Better Time Management Evaluation of Possible

Solutions So what could be done to reduce the level of paper being handled

and still be able to maintain an up to date database? Solution 1 Scanner:

This could reduce the level of paper handled in our office, and would allow only designated personnel to access information.

A Fajitas machine was, recommended by a local office equipment firm. (16 pages per minute with the facility to add at a later date duplex (double sided

scanning) – cost \$1,500. The information in the documents may be typewritten, handwritten or computer printed text or graphics. As soon as the information on a document is scanned (and thereby digitized and converted to electronic form) and indexed, the document can be stored, retrieved, transmitted, displayed and processed.

Letters and certificates of all types that are typically processed by hand could be processed electronically. The scanner works with Microsoft Windows the information would be scanned to a location on a shared network, as our department uses Windows at present this will reduce training costs and make the users more comfortable with using a scanner. Solution 2 E-Mail and store on CD/DVD – Data does not need to be printed out, if the information needs to be given to someone else, it can be forwarded on, All of my department use email at present and would not need to be trained.

Conclusions Having investigated the possible solutions to enable my office to reduce the level of paper handled, I considered the findings in relation to my solutions. Solution one: Scanner this could be a fast and reliable function in retrieving data. If the department needs to retrieve a data this solution would be of great advantage as the data is stored in the computer file system. Data would not need to be printed out, reducing the level of paper handled in the office. All the information can be seen on We could have a folder for each employee and be able to view in chronological order.

The image standard would be that of a PDF file, which is viewed on the free download Adobe Acrobat Reader Software (www.adobe.com) Alternatively documents could be scanned and viewed as Tiff Images. This form of image

is universally recognized and is viewed using Windows 98 or 2000. The Tiff imaging comes free with windows. The comments can be backed up easily on the company server, another benefit is that should information be accidentally be deleted it can be retrieved with the back up files.

There would be less risk of data being lost and at the same time space saving. Paper records can only be filed in one place with a scanner it would ensure the reliability of information, but at a finer level of granularity. It could support a more efficient office by avoiding duplication and wasted work. Solution 2 E-mail and store to CD/DVD. This way of reducing the level of paper handling is ideal so long as every employee has an email.