

Memorandum for a paperless office



A paperless office is a working ecosystem in which the workers eliminated the use of papers or reduce the percentage use of papers in their daily operations. In paperless offices, the documents are converted from papers into digital forms. The officers in such companies also prepare and present new material in digital forms known as the paperless forms (Shepherd & Appleseed Productions, 1991). A paperless office has many advantages over those offices that prepare and present their work on papers. Among the benefits are the boosts of productivity, time and space saving, environmental safety boost and security of information among others. The paper-loaded offices, therefore, expose the business and the natural environment to a variety of problems like insecurity and environmental pollution among others. This paper concentrates on the environmental pollution by the papers from the offices that use papers in their operations in demonstration to why our office should go paperless. It describes the problems that arise due to the paper pollution and the possible solution to such problems. It also explains why environmental pollution is the fundamental problem among other problems that result from the use of hardcopy documents in offices.

Many people in business did not believe in the existence of a paperless office. The concept of paperless office remained a myth even after a half a century when marketers had coined the term and concepts of paperless office (Shepherd & Appleseed Productions, 1991). At the time when almost all employees in different business offices could access computer terminals and when the mobile phone devices with high pixel densities that were indistinguishable from those of print media were in place, many workers and

offices had not reduced the rate of paper usage. However, today many people understand the importance of paperless office due to technological improvements that occur on a frequent basis. An office can go paperless by getting the right support infrastructure within their working environment. Agencies can set a multi-monitor workstation to reduce printing of document which majorly occurs due to the need to cross- reference one document with the other (Shepherd & Appleseed Productions, 1991). Our vendors and clients who insist on using fax machine can sign up for an online fax provider that emails any incoming new fax direct to the service provider in the office. The markets utilize free and paid options that eliminate the necessity of a physical fax machine. The workers in the office can also digitalize the paper notes and any other printed work and share the documents electronically instead of making mass photocopies that create environmental pollution when the papers are disposed of after use. The management of the organizations can also venture into reducing the number of printers in the offices to discourage printing. They can also employ online payments to eliminate checks and envelopes.

Use of paperless offices solves many problems that exist from the paper-loaded offices. The disadvantages of using papers in offices include a high cost of employing the skilled managers for print- based documents, a high cost of printing materials, and high cost of disposing of printed papers after use. The cost of recycling the used papers is also great encouraging many companies to dispose of the papers in the open environment (Shepherd & Appleseed Productions, 1991). The other problem that arises from the use of papers in offices is high transportation cost. This is visible where a company

needs to communicate with other businesses by using printed documents. The problem of time wastage and insecurity reduces the dependence on hardcopies to pass information. The problem of environmental pollution is quite immense compared to other problems because it does affect not only the operating office but also the whole community in the locality of disposal. I like this problem because it is environmental pollution is a global issue, and it has many consequences of the life of the people. The solution to the environmental pollution would result in a suitable environment with low susceptibility to illness to the living communities. Reducing the use of papers in offices is one of the key steps in ensuring a safe environment to accommodate all the people.

As an environmental pollutant, the use of hardcopy documents has different negative impacts. From the production of the papers, 40% of world's commercially cut timbers are used as raw materials in the paper production industries (Shepherd ; Appleseed Productions, 1991). Shepherd and Appleseed Productions (1991) continue to note that over 30 million acres of forests remain open lands annually after their destruction to manufacture papers encouraging deforestation, a major world; s problem. The paper production requires many litres of water. For instance, an A4 paper requires about 10 litres of water per sheet (Shepherd ; Appleseed Productions, 1991). Different offices produce different quantities of paper documents per day. Research shows that on an average office worker uses about 10, 000 sheets of printing papers per year (Shepherd ; Appleseed Productions, 1991). It is important to note that majority of the papers ends in the disposal pits at the end of every day of the printing. About 45% of the papers the staffs print in

offices ends up in dumpsites, accumulating to trillion of sheets per year on the worldwide account.

After use, the adverse effects of paper usage become intense during recycling. Recycling is important; however, it does not save the environment. Paper recycling is never definite, that is, the recycled paper is never suitable for reuse. There is always need to add wood pulp to the recycled papers to improve their quality for use. The pulp and paper industries consume a lot of energy to produce the final product. Shepherd and Appleseed Productions (1991) note that the paper industry is the fifth largest consumer of energy on the world; s scale, accounting for about 4% of all the global energy use. The use of excessive water by this industry also poses the environment to challenges of the availability of water. Some offices do not recycle their used papers. Instead, they burn the papers in open air that leads to the emission of carbon dioxide gas. Others dispose the paper materials into the landfills. When the papers in the landfills rot, they release methane, a greenhouse gas which is an environmental pollutant.

The solution to environmental pollution caused by paper usage is encouraging paperless office work. Offices contribute a lot of paper pollution by the daily printing of documents. The use of emails and technological devices should be in place to enhance sharing of softcopy documents to reducing the filing of papers in office cabinets and dumpsites when the papers are out of use (Shepherd ; Appleseed Productions, 1991). The use of document management software can also enhance reduction in paper usage and provide high inspiration to employees together with substantial

monetary savings by the organization. The environment will be free from the pollution caused by paper usage and associated industries.

Different organizations have carried out research on effects of paper to the environment. Recent research by the ; *US Environmental Protection Agency* ; shows from their analysis that each year the world produces over 300 million tonnes of paper. The largest paper consumption occurs in schools and business office environments even though there are new and improved technologies to help offices go paperless (Shepherd ; Appleseed Productions, 1991). In the last 20 years as the research shows, the usage of papers products increased from 92 million tonnes to 208 million tonnes, a 126% growth. The agency reports that Americans continues to consume the largest paper per capita in the world with consumption rate beyond 500 lbs. annually. The high expenditures pose many environmental challenges to the societies across the globe.

In conclusion, paper usage in offices raises the level of environmental pollution due to improper disposal after use. Recycling procedures are however not safe to the environment due to the emission of poisonous gas and other wastes to the atmosphere and water bodies. Converting an office to go paperless is one of the best strategies to curb this global problem.

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Reference

Shepherd, G., ; Appleseed Productions (Vic). (1991). *The Paperless Office* . Williamstown, Vic: Appleseed Productions.

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