

Legal Services National Technology Assistance Project

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Becoming a Paperless Law Firm

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It's all of our responsibility to protect the planet, and to do our part to minimize our impact as much as possible. One big thing your organization can do to help is cutting down on paper waste produced in your office. Removing all waste entirely might not be realistic but there are many things your firm can do, and services your firm can utilize that will help you drastically reduce the unnecessary paper waste produced by your office.

The graphic features a dark blue background with a stylized tree on the left. The title 'Becoming a Paperless Law Firm' is centered, with 'Paperless' in green and 'Becoming a' and 'Law Firm' in white. Below the title is a light orange rounded rectangle containing the main text.

Enviromental Impact

of Paper-Based Payroll for 10 Person Business Annually



LANDFILL

57 LBS



GASOLINE

1.3 Metric Tons CO₂



PAPER

48 LBS CO₂



WASTE WATER

2,080 Gallons



TREES

1 Tree

Benefits of Going Paperless

(Beyond Just Saving the Actual Planet)



Lower costs associated with purchasing and labor



Improving communication with clients and other organizations



Document automation, e-signing etc



You won't have to drag in a large box of documents into court



If traveling, in court or working at home, you will have your files ready



Make finding documents faster and easier



You will always have a backup of your work for emergencies

Planning Paperless

What is your Firm's

Plan and Deadline?



In order to make the switch to a paperless office you need a plan in place for your organization and for your individual workers. Do you have the staff available to handle document scanning and the digitization of your records? If so you should set a hard date for making that switch and answer some basic questions.

Do the people in your office have a plan for handling documents when they come in?

How are your Documents Scanned?

Is Your Office Ready?



Educate Your Staff

Train Employees to Go Paperless

There will need to be regular meetings to ensure people in the office are following procedures put in place for organization and digitization. Everyone should know exactly what to do when they receive a document or something needs to be filed.



Electronic Filing

A crucial step in going paperless is getting your records and your contacts stored in an online system. Doing so will save your staff time & effort, saving money which can be spent on more deserving causes.



E-Signatures

In the past when you had a complex document that needed to be signed, everyone had to gather in the same room and it was time consuming for everyone involved. Today, we can do this online.



Office Scanner

One thing you should do right away if you haven't already, is buy a high quality scanner for your office. Since going paperless will involve digitizing your papers, this will be a necessary tool for the entire office.



Documents

Very affordable and free sites like Drop or Gsuite can help your entire office access the same files, no matter where they are in the world. This is particularly useful if you have staff who travel.

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Using paper is on the way out, and for good reason. Paper is bad for the environment, even if you are conscientious about recycling there is still an environmental impact associated with creating the paper and even producing new paper from recycled paper. The ideal path is always going to be going digital, which has a number of other advantages including saving money, delays associated with finding and filing documents, poor organization and other problems.

There are a lot of benefits to going digital as well, such as:

- Lower costs associated with purchasing and labor
- Improving communication with clients and other organizations
- Document automation, e-signing etc. [Click Here](#) to read our blog entry on e-signing methods.
- You won't have to drag in a large box of documents into court and (if properly prepared) you can simply access your documents from your cellphone. What will look better in front of a jury? Digging for files and having issues finding them or having everything at hand?
- Don't be confined to the office. If you are traveling, in court or working from home you will always have your files at hand.

- Make finding things easier. Say you want a specific case file, but need it right then for a specific moment. If digitized you can search for a keyword, if not you will be having to sort through documents.
- You will always have a backup of your work for emergencies. No fire, or flood or mishap will ever cost you those files you spent so long putting together.

Stop Creating a Big Mess

There is a few things I would suggest you get on top of ASAP:

- Digitizing files, moving your old paper files to the cloud
- Managing and organizing your documents
- Coming up with a standard method in your office for doing things

Design a paperless workflow

In order to make the switch to a paperless office you need a plan in place for your organization and for your individual workers. For example, if a paper document is mailed to your office how is that document managed? It needs to be scanned, tagged, put in the right part of the cloud and then sent to the proper people in the office. Do the people in your office have a plan for this? Are they ready?

Many find it helpful to physically write things down, and to create an actual written up flowchart for how these kind of situations would be handled.

Training Members Of Your Firm

There will need to be regular meetings to ensure people in the office are following procedures put in place for organization and digitization. Everyone should know exactly what to do when they receive a document or something needs to be filed. For those that aren't particularly tech savvy, this could require extra work. Remember your process only works as well as the weakest link in your procedures.

 [How to Build a Paperless Office PDF](#)

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<http://www.lsntap.org/node/190/becoming-paperless-law-firm>

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