Resistance to Technology is Costing You More than Just Currency
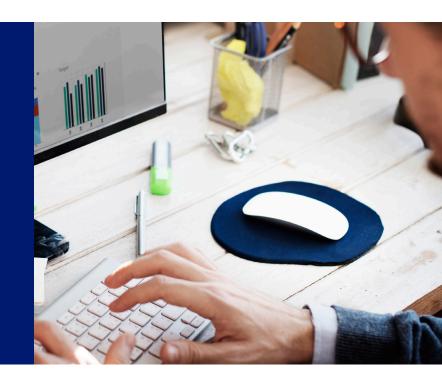
TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Introduction

Technology is changing the way business is conducted – profoundly and forever. Implementing the right technologies can create a huge improvement to an organization's efficiencies. This is especially true for small and medium sized businesses which can maximize limited resources by automating business processes that were formerly done manually.

However, despite the acceptance of new technology, many businesses still depend heavily on paper. Most companies obtain approvals, complete transactions or enlist others for peer reviews using physical documents rather than technology. Employees also rely on paper to communicate, record important data and share information.

The presence of paper in business processes can have a major impact on your business, and Human Resource departments are frequently most affected. A paper-based HR department is detrimental in more than just the obvious costs – it can also affect productivity and employee satisfaction.

Small businesses must become more efficient, technologically-driven and cost-effective, and part of that can be achieved with a digital document management system. The purpose of this eBook is to inform small and medium-sized businesses of the hidden costs of paper document management and the impact it can have on their business and their employees.

Workflow Inefficiencies and Productivity loss

How do you usually share documents with outside parties, such as auditors or business partners, or internally across departments? You probably scan the paper document you need and send the digital version to yourself. Then you send the document as an email attachment to the person requesting the document.

Not only is this method time consuming, but it also means that you are losing control of the document. Multiple copies of that document now exist in Inboxes and Sent folders. The document could be forwarded to someone or printed, and the person who originally emailed the document would have no knowledge of this happening. Documents managed by Human Resources are very sensitive, and sharing them by email could lead to the exposure of personally identifiable information (PII).

Employees also feel the lack of efficient document management processes on a daily basis. According to one study by IDC[1], although three-quarters of the workers surveyed use one or more applications, when it comes to document management, they are left to use outdated methods. These manual tasks cost them precious time and effort, affecting their efficiency.

Often, employees must create documents manually, spending time copying and pasting information, formatting it into a single document, and so on. According to Adobe[2], 43% of employees claim that they need to use several disconnected systems to copy and paste information and create documents. All of these small, repetitive tasks add up, and take time away from more critical assignments.

Another major drain on your HR team's time is searching for documents. When information is kept in several disparate systems, it can be next to impossible to find the information needed in a timely manner. According to research[3], employees only spend up to 15% of their time reading information, but they spend a staggering 50% of their days searching for it. That is a considerable loss of time that could be reduced by moving to a digital solution.

Just think what you and your HR team could be doing with your time, if you weren't searching for information? Reduce the amount of paper created and move to a system that can automate your processes; you could see an increase in productivity of at least 30% due to time savings.

1. https://acrobat.adobe.com/content/dam/doc-cloud/en/pdfs/idc-adobe-document-disconnect-whitepaper-global-ue-final.pdf

2. https://acrobat.adobe.com/content/dam/doc-cloud/en/pdfs/idc-adobe-document-disconnect-whitepaper-global-ue-final.pdf

3. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140730152702-95020467-3-reasons-to-make-a-paperless-office-a-priority

Employee Frustration

Automating document processes can save a lot more than time; it can also save your employees' mental energy. Adobe[4] looked into the attitudes of information workers around the world, and how efficient they are at getting work done. The study, which analyzed the work habits of more than 5,000 workers in France, Germany, Australia, the U.S. and the UK, found that outdated paper document management processes has a negative impact on employee productivity and satisfaction.

The study found that 83% of employees feel that their ability to focus and be productive is slowed down by excessive paperwork. Furthermore, 60% of workers believe that inefficient document management distracts them from more important tasks.

Paperwork has more than just a negative impact on productivity; it hurts employee satisfaction as well. According to the study, 61% of workers worldwide say they would change jobs if one of the benefits was not having to deal with so much paperwork. Perhaps that desire for change is partially due to 34% of U.S. business professionals believing inefficient paper processes hold back their career advancement.

In today's competitive landscape the ability to hire and retain skilled workers could depend on the efficiencies of the hiring organization's document management processes. Forward-thinking workers are looking for forward-thinking employers. Leveraging the right technologies could be your competitive differentiator.

Companies that replace paper-based processes with a digital document management solution can experience significant improvements in productivity and employee satisfaction. And, as the "employee champion" of every organization, HR professionals should be the leaders of this paperless move towards increased team morale.

4. https://wwwimages2.adobe.com/content/dam/Adobe/en/newsroom/pdfs/201503/PaperJamReport.pdf

Negative Impact on Customer Experience

In the age of immediacy, customer expectations are rising dramatically, and businesses are looking for better ways to respond to their needs. People want what they want now, and have no patience for a company that can't produce information promptly. Outdated practices impact customer response times, affecting their experience with your business.

Technology has increased the speed of doing business. If the first step in responding to a customer request is searching through paper files, you are doing a disservice to your clients. By using a digital document management solution, those employees interacting with customers can have immediate access to the documents they need.

Through a simple interface, digital documents can be integrated with other business systems that are already being used by different departments. This digital integration allows companies to analyze the data within the documents in order to make smarter, and more informed, business decisions. Document management software can give you $10 worth of value from a $1 piece of information.

According to new studies[5], businesses that implement document management solutions have experienced gains in employee responsiveness to customers. As a result, employees are better at keeping customers happy due to the increased speed at which they can meet their needs. This statement applies to both external and internal customers.

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5. https://acrobat.adobe.com/content/dam/doc-cloud/en/pdfs/idc-adobe-document-disconnect-whitepaper-global-ue-final.pdf

Why Addressing Document Management is Critical in HR

Ask any HR professional about the inefficiency of a paper office and they will tell you about the amount of documents that need signatures, and the burden of storing employment contracts, certifications and performance appraisals, to name a few.

The HR department is among the most affected by outdated documentation processes. In fact, according to one study[6], HR professionals claim that 31% of their time would be freed up simply by implementing a digital document management system.

The benefits of moving from paper processes to digital workflows are tremendous. For example, employee documents related to performance or promotions may need to pass through multiple levels of approval. If these documents are paper, the process is painfully slow and there is no way to determine where things are in the approval process. However, using document management technology that can automatically route digital documents for approval or signature makes the process streamlined and allows HR to monitor its status.

In small to medium-sized businesses, HR teams are typically minimal, making the reduction of administrative tasks critical. HR leaders must focus their time on improving employee engagement, recruiting, and training and development. When an HR department can concentrate on these areas, the entire organization benefits. Selecting the right talent and improving the skill level of a company's workforce better positions that company for success.

6. https://acrobat.adobe.com/content/dam/doc-cloud/en/pdfs/idc-adobe-document-disconnect-whitepaper-global-ue-final.pdf

Final Word

It can be difficult to justify a change, especially when a system has been working for so long. However, it is no longer an option to do things "the old way," and adapting to new technologies is fundamental to your small business' survival. Stop wondering if paper needs to be reduced, and start determining when and where would be best for you to start.

Human Resources is commonly the starting point because the entire organization benefits when processes, such as new hire onboarding, become paperless. HR departments can spend less time trying to manage paper employee files and more time improving culture and employee engagement.

Increasing efficiency, lowering costs and improving response times to customers, staff and regulators are only a few of the top reasons paper has to be removed from business processes. One of the best ways to keep pace with the changes is to opt for a cloud-based document management system.

For even more helpful resources regarding cloud-based storage, view our on-demand webinar "No Document Strategy? Paper Cuts are the Least of your Worries."

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

BJ Johnson has spent over 15 years in the records and information management industry, and has assisted numerous HR departments with their digital initiatives. In other words, this guy knows a lot about the real pain points you, as an HR professional, are facing every day with all that paper and is kind of obsessed with helping you get on board with a digital transformation.

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