Artifacts in your workplace: Toss them or tolerate them?

Advances in technology make your work easier, and your organization scrambles to stay current. You know the advantages: You can attract tech-savvy job candidates, retain top performers who rely on cutting-edge tools and you can get work done more efficiently.

But have you taken a look around your office to see some of the stuff you need to update or get rid of? ... Or maybe you shouldn’t ditch some things just yet:

**Rolodexes.** This is how your father “friended” people. It’s a device where contact information is written and stored on rotating alpha-index cards. The upshot: Rolodex will function during a power outage. The downshot: During that outage, everyone left work anyway. Of course, today’s contacts are stored on phones and online calendars, so a Rolodex is not needed.

*Your best bet:* If someone still has one, there’s no harm. Rolodexes are still available for purchase along with refill cards if you need to update them. But don’t hand them out as gifts to your staff. Some might not know what they are.

**Filing cabinets.** These steely towers are dying a slow death and it’s really hard to say goodbye. You have documents from a decade or so ago that you still must keep and it’s a lot easier to leave them entombed in the cabinets than to scan them and store them electronically. Trouble is, your millennial workers may have trouble locating files in a wall of steel drawers because the “search function” is physical.

*Your best bet:* Phase them out (the cabinets, not the millennials). There’s valuable floor space underneath them. And too much junk on top—and let’s face it—inside too.

**Desktop telephones.** To a growing number of people—especially millennials—a phone belongs in the pocket, not the desk. Plus, most communication that is bantered around the office and that flies into or out of the office is done via email or personal smartphones. Many workers are startled when their desk phone rings, and some don’t know how to transfer a phone call or put customers on hold, in the event an outside call inadvertently lands on their desk. The result: Customers’ and clients’ calls are mishandled or left for dead in voice mail.

*Your best bet:* At least for now, you need a telephone system, although that might change in the coming years. Make sure everyone knows how to transfer calls, put customers on and off hold, and retrieve voice messages. You might be surprised how many employees don’t know how to work your phone system.
Fax machine. This document-sharing device was revolutionary at one time as it replaced sending papers through the U.S. Mail, which required a pricey manila envelope and a small row of equally pricey postage stamps. With a facsimile machine (its formal name), instead of days, your important contract reached its destination in minutes, and within minutes it was returned, signed. Today, copiers can scan and send those same signed documents through email.

Your best bet: Hang onto your fax machine. Some customers and clients still use them and you don’t want to lose their business. Put the fax machine in an inconspicuous spot where customers and job candidates can’t see it. It’s nothing to be proud of.

Business cards. A box of 1,000 business cards used to be a nice “welcome aboard” perk for a new employee. Those crisply minted cards with an employee’s name and job title near your logo were a great morale booster for the price. Employees would shove handfuls into brief cases and special business-card holders, and would dish them out to family, friends and anyone else who would take one. Today, workers swap their job info on social media. Plus, many millennials will look at 1,000 business cards as a life sentence in your company—something they don’t want.

Your best bet: Give them a small box of business cards. Most people still get a thrill out of seeing their names and job titles near a company logo on a business card. It still holds up as a great morale booster for the price. Even if they hand them out to just family.