

4 tips for going paperless

Many offices are moving away from paper to protect the environment, spend less on printing supplies and reduce office clutter. Going paperless can also keep information more secure. Working in a paperless environment is a breeze, but getting there is not. Here are four tips to help you make the change.

- 1. Use the cloud.** All that data has to live somewhere. If stored on a local computer, you risk crashes and will have limited access to information outside the office, cautions Andy Brasfield, co-founder of Southeastern Laser, a printing supply company that specializes in paperless technology. Conversely, a cloud-based solution such as Dropbox, Brasfield's preferred service, can allow access to documents from anywhere, requires no backup and can have different permission levels.
- 2. Start with accounting.** "Since accounting is probably the one office function with the most need for good data, going paperless with your bookkeeping, billing, accounts receivable and accounts payable will be the most cost effective and efficient up front," says David Evans, CPA, Alloy Silverstein.
- 3. Conduct paperless meetings.** "We go to the conference room and use our large LCD screen to conduct the meeting and go over key figures, reports, initiatives and projects," says Jovim Ventura, founder of InoPrints.com. His company encourages note taking, making to-do lists and setting appointments in Notepad, Google Tasks and Google Calendar, respectively. This gets rid of handwritten meeting notes and multiple Post-its afterward.
- 4. Discourage printing.** Remove all desktop printers and locate one or two heavy-duty printers in a central location, recommends Bill Horne, owner of William Warren Consulting. Horne also recommends tracking printing to each employee and notifying them that usage will be monitored.