



NCB

*National Computer Board*

# **GUIDELINE** **for SETTING UP** **PAPERLESS OFFICE**

**Avoid**

**The**

**Paper**

**Go**

**Green!**

# INTRODUCTION

Paperless office is a work environment in which the use of paper is eliminated or greatly reduced. This is done by converting documents and other papers into digital form. While a 100% paperless office is unattainable, a few decisive steps applied over enough time can dramatically reduce if not eliminate the vast majority of paper. "Going paperless" can save money, boost productivity, save space, make documentation and information sharing easier, keep personal information more secure, and make an eco-friendly office. The concept can also be extended to communications outside the office.

## Purpose of this document

This document provides the general guidelines for the implementation of a paperless office starting from planning the storage and processing of documents , planning the roles of people in your organisation till the implementation phase of the paperless office.

In a paperless environment you can easily store documents e.g. reports, faxes, invoices, letters, etc.. in electronic forms on a centralised harddrive thus eliminating the need for cumbersome physical files. Once you begin implementing the paperless office, you can improve your firm's speed, security, accuracy, and ease of document retrieval, along with eliminating the need for additional physical storage space for department files.

## Benefits of paperless office

In a paperless

These are what some businesses have benefitted while going paperless:

- Reduced cost and quicker access to information
- More physical space
- Access anywhere, anytime and much quicker
- Less paper in
- Less temporary paper
- Less paper out

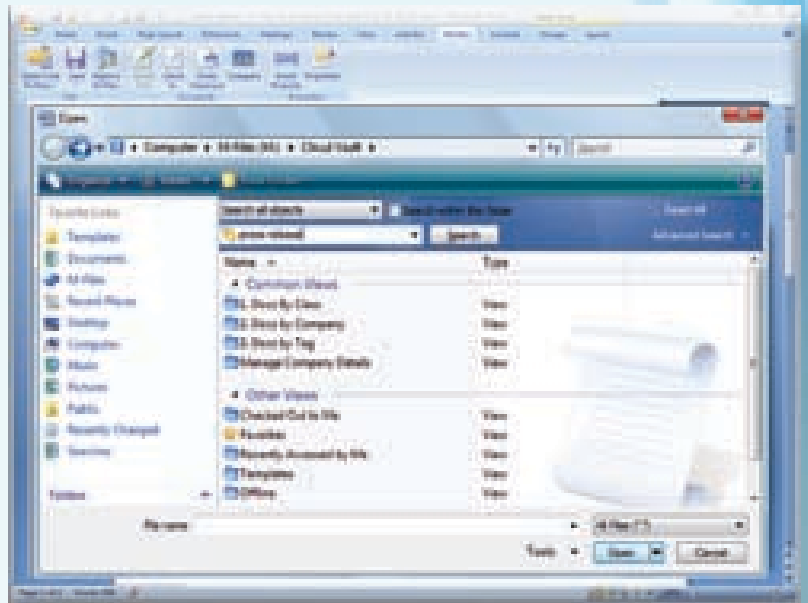
## PLANNING THE FILING STRUCTURE AND STORAGE OF DOCUMENTS

Once you have decided to go paperless, the next step you need to take is planning the type of file structure you are going to use as well as how documents will be organised. You may have to hold brainstorming session with various members of each department in your organisation to develop a drawer and folder type structure for your entire organisation. We suggest that you include at least one member from each division and department in your organization in these sessions.

The following list of questions might be helpful when brainstorming the file structure for the organisation:

- What types of document do you have currently in your filing system?
- Which documents your organisation might want to store electronically?
- Which documents do you need to access very often and quickly?
- Which internal documents could be stored electronically?
- Decide on which date you should start to store identified documents electronically?

You will also need a way to access and manage your computerised documents. A document management system consists of computer software that allows you to performs simple tasks such as filing, indexing and document retrieval to more complex tasks such as workflow.



## ORGANISATIONAL PLANNING

After identifying how you are going to save your organisations files, it is imperative to define key personnel roles especially in medium to large organisation.

All personnel roles must be properly defined. Staffs who will be responsible for maintaining the file structures, train other staff members on using the file structures and who will scan documents will have to be identified. It may be appropriate that the staff who does the copying and printing is responsible for scanning and storing the documents.



## IDENTIFYING HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE



In terms of hardware needs, it is recommended that sufficient disk space is made available. Because hard drive space is relatively inexpensive, we recommend purchasing more hard drive space than you think your firm will need in the future to accommodate additional storage space.

When assessing your hardware needs, you need also to consider your scanning needs. Depending on your scanning needs, the type and number of scanners required for your organisation will have to be determined. The scanners will be used to convert all your documents to electronic and in universal format for e.g. PDF. PDF captures documents as they appear on-screen with fonts and formatting intact.

In terms of software you may also need OCR software to convert hard copy to text document for editing purposes.

As described in the planning the filing structure and storage of documents section above, you can acquire document management software to facilitate organisation of data and capture of digital file material (scanned documents as well as e-mail, Web pages, graphics, video files, audio files, photos, word processing documents, and spreadsheets). If you are unsure how to proceed, hire a computer consultant to assist in the selection, installation, and customization of both hardware and software.



## SECURITY PLANNING

After identifying what documents need to be accessed more frequently and quickly, you need to use commonly recommended security measures. While Document management system offers security features, you may go beyond that with security measures that provide confidentiality by protecting against unauthorized entry such as routers, firewalls, antivirus software and password protected access to protect the documents. Take steps to ensure that documents stored electronically cannot be inadvertently modified or destroyed. This can be done through file property settings in Adobe Acrobat or at the network level by controlling access to files and folders.

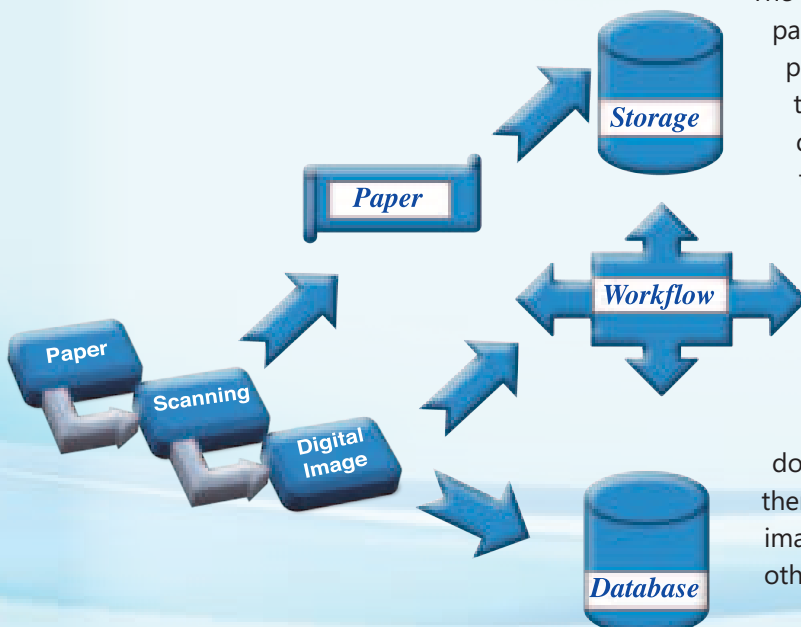


In case you are using a document management system you need to assign staff members to security groups so that to enable or deny access to files and folders.

## IMPLEMENTATION

After you have finalised your filing structure, your personnel roles, your requirements in terms of storage, hardware and software, you are ready for implementing your paperless office. It is recommended not to implement a one-step company-wide conversion to paperless office. Instead, consider implementing the paperless office in a single department or small group of departments first. This will limit the scope of any issues you encounter and allow you to refine your company's approach to electronic document storage before incorporating new procedures, hardware and software throughout the company.

## A SIMPLE PAPERLESS OFFICE SOLUTION



The diagram below shows a simple paperless office solution. Various processes are highlighted which shows the scanning and conversion of paper documents to digital image that are then stored on CD, DVD or other magnetic media. Once the images are digitized you can convert to many different formats including PDF, JPG, TIFF, GIF, etc.

Optical character recognition (OCR) can also be done on hard copy of document. By performing OCR, you can then copy recognised text from a scanned image or fax into a Word, PDF, Excel, or other office program file.

## PROCESSING OF DOCUMENTS



In a paperless filing system, paper records may be minimal or non-existent. All paper documents are scanned and stored in a format such as PDF format. Optical Character Reader (OCR) software is used to render the scanned PDFs searchable.

Establish a protocol for the proper disposal of paper after scanning. As a general rule, keep original documents whose authenticity may be disputed, or those with particular legal importance (original signed contracts, original executed wills, etc.). Paper not meeting these criteria (or other criteria identified by the firm) can be shredded or discarded.

All incoming and outgoing documents should be processed electronically, stored and backup regularly. Convert all inbound and outbound faxes for electronic transmission.

**Electronic faxing** — With electronic faxing, a company no longer needs paper-using fax machines. Incoming faxes are converted to digital images and sent to individual e-mail boxes. Similarly, documents created on the desktop can be sent to a fax machine via e-mail or the Web. Electronic faxing also is more secure because paper copies can't be lost or left on a fax machine for everyone to see.

The processes involved in the processing of incoming and outgoing documents are described in the follow sections.



## INBOUND DOCUMENTS

One person should be responsible for opening all incoming mail, sorting it, and date stamping it. In a paperless filing system, date stamping can also be accomplished after the mail is scanned by applying a date and time stamp using adobe acrobat.

The diagram below shows the steps involved in the processing of inbound documents in a paperless environment.

**Document arrives** — document can be letters, faxes, reports etc..

**Incoming date stamped** — person for incoming mail date-stamp the document.

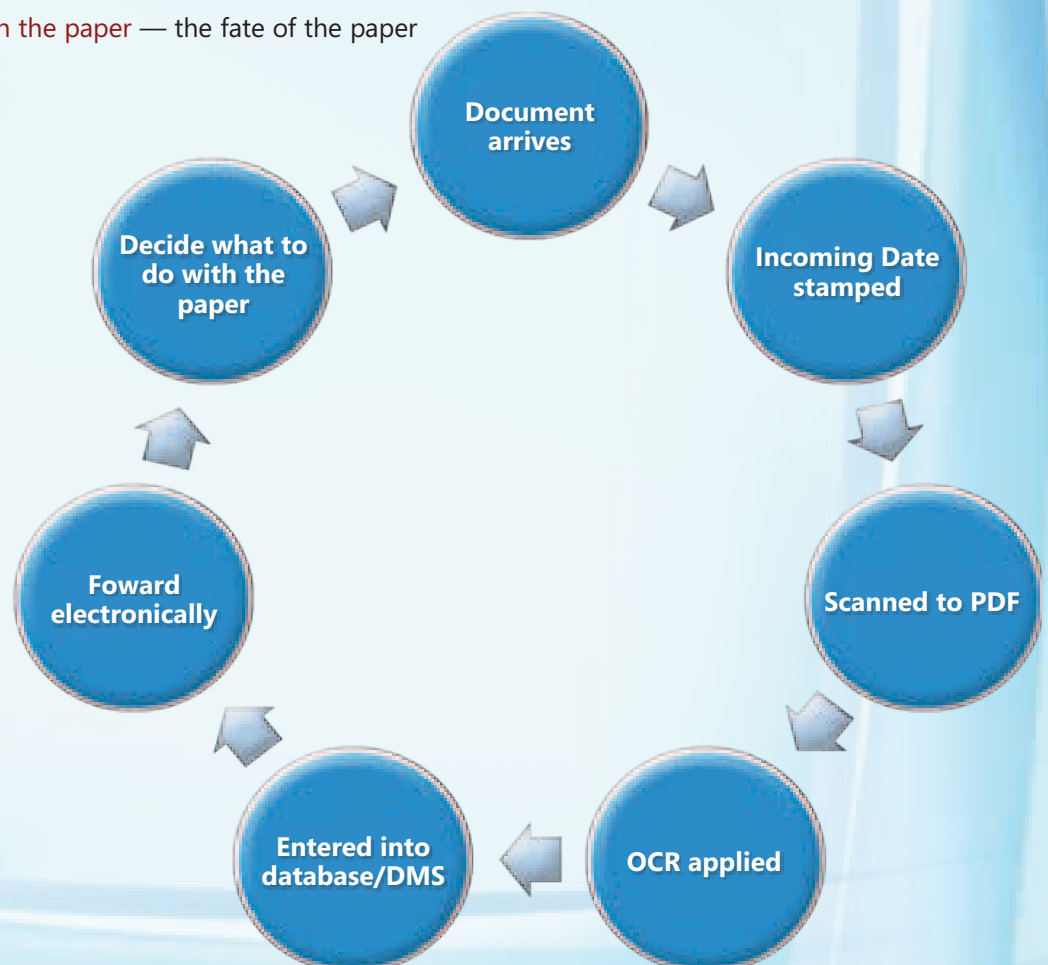
**Scanned to PDF** — document is scanned using a scanner to produce a PDF file

**OCR applied** — OCR can be used as optional if document will need to be edited or saved in an editable format.

**Entered into database/DMS** — the output file is then stored into a database/DMS or into a folder

**Forward electronically** — a copy of the file is then forwarded electronically for processing (this process can be automated using A DMS)

**Decide what to do with the paper** — the fate of the paper is then decided.



## OUTBOUND DOCUMENTS

The diagram below highlights the processes involved for all outgoing documents including faxes, letters, reports etc. [Note that the processes involved are for traditionally signed document and not for electronically signed document where the processes can be much simplified.]

The diagram below shows the steps involved in the processing of outbound documents in a paperless environment.

**Electronic files created** — an electronic file can be a letter, report, contract invoice etc. created with word, excel, pdf, or any other software

**Saved to client's folder** — the file is first saved to the client's folder or on a server

**Entered into a Database/DMS** — the file can then be saved into a database/DMS

**Printed** — if the document needs to be signed it is printed

**Scanned** — the document is then scanned

**Saved again** — the signed document has to be saved again

**Database/DMS updated** — the file is updated with the signed version

**Sent to client** — the file is finally sent to the

Client or recipient





## BACKUP DOCUMENTS

Always make sure that you constantly backup your electronic data on disk, hard drive or server and test your backup with a restore as often as possible. It is recommended that you invest in two different backup systems where one of the backups is always kept offsite.



## DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Many companies generate hundred thousand, in some cases over million documents. To deal with the increases in content, the DMS has proven its efficacy in reducing paper work and facilitate easier storage, routing and archival of documents. Depending on the size and the needs of your company a document management system can be very useful for the management of your electronic data. There are many document management systems available. If you are unsure about the implementation of a document management system you may hire an IT consultant. There are many advantages associated with document management system such as the automation of processes through well defined workflow.

Document management system also offers extras such as:



- User authentication for increased security
- availability of content from anywhere, anytime
- Digital signatures
- security and accuracy of information
- complete tracking of documents
- no document loss due to misfiling or in transit in comparison to physical document management
- Multimedia filing, bringing together various types of files such as visual images, video, text and spreadsheets

