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Going Paperless in 2016: saving resources, staff time and being green

by Lance C. Clark, CAE, OREF, LLC CEO

For a decade plus, we all have heard the phrase “going paperless.” Individuals, businesses, associations and organizations globally have embraced the green movement and are minimizing their carbon footprint. Hopefully, you, your associated employer and clients are also doing more work in the Cloud and utilizing alternative electronic and digital communication instead of print media and paperwork.

In the daily business world, we all consume a lot of information and data. Instead of producing and copying massive amounts of information on countless sheets of paper (even though trees are a renewable resource), we all have the opportunity to save resources in the following areas:

- Energy reduction (less print and copy usage from our print devices)
- Reams upon reams of paper, toner and ink cartridges
- Document shredding, time and energy
- Staff time printing and assembling three-ring binders, reports and documents; several that become shelf art and often aren't even taken to committee, board and work meetings.

It will be interesting to review operating budget and monthly financials comparison per supplies line-item expenses throughout the year and analyze the print/copy quantities; initial estimate is that we will save better than 60%.

In February 2016, our company Oregon Real Estate Forms, LLC implemented a paperless work environment for our LLC board of managers, committee and staff team initiative. In 2015, our company had our website www.orefonline.com re-designed and a new robust website was launched in the Wordpress environment. It just makes perfect sense in our company's administrative operations to be paperless, especially considering that our subscribers access the real estate transactional and advisory forms via electronic subscription.

A few months later, staff went through training to eliminate development and maintenance of Board and committee three-ring binders, as well as the continual residual meeting packet updates in a printed/copied format. Within a couple of days, new appointee orientation materials, 3-ring binder content, meeting packets and meeting minutes were uploaded in a matter of hours.

The most immediate accolades from Board and committee members is the expression of freedom; not having to lug paperwork to and from meetings. And, minimizing the number of monthly e-mails (communication overload and volunteer search in their Outlook) sent to our volunteer members was another top constructive feedback. Volunteers access the information portal via log-in credentials for advance review, in-session review during meetings (WIFI access and overhead projection screen visuals) and post-review of minutes and other uploaded materials. Company materials have security level coding to ensure that the information is kept in strict confidentiality and utilizing the back-end resources of an existing website means that there are no additional uploads to other sources like Dropbox.

Oregon Real Estate Forms, LLC, owned by three Oregon Realtor® Associations (OAR, PMAR and EAR) has been in existence since 1997. For more information, log on to www.orefonline.com or call (503) 459-0195.

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Clark is a 15-year association management professional and is an active member of American Society Association of Executives, Oregon Society of Association Management, Washington Society Association Executives and Non-Profit Oregon.