

Cut down on office consumption by reducing and reusing fine paper

by Shoshana Brickman

The average Canadian office employee wastes about their weight in fine paper every year. About 60 kilograms of the stuff is the estimate, and in tree terms that's in the neighbourhood of 24,000 trees. That's a lot of trees.

Paper is a vital resource, and something that we will always need. However, do we really need so much of it? And do we need to cut down so many trees to get it?

The amount of paper that we consume today is ridiculously high. Many of our current paper-using-practices are

frivolous and expensive, and they can be changed to reduce our use of trees and other valuable resources. The first and most important step we can take is reduction of how much paper we use.

Practical ideas

The place where the most fine paper is used is in the office. Here are some easy and practical reduction ideas that can be used:

- Use both sides of the paper when writing and photocopying.
- When circulating memos use a routing slip rather than making multiple copies. Less

will end up on the office floor, and overall there will probably be more copies read because people know that the information has to be passed on and can't just sit in their briefcase.

Face-to-face

- Use telephone calls and face-to-face talking rather than memos and letters whenever possible. This isn't only more environmentally sound, it's friendlier.
- Make note pads by using paper that's blank on one side. Just line up the sheets and staple them together.

Reducing the amount of fine

paper you use is the most environmentally sensible thing to do. After reducing all that you can, we come to the next best step, reusing the resources that you already have at hand.

- Don't throw away envelopes or letterheads with your address on them when you move. You can reuse them as scrap paper or donate them to a non-profit group that needs office supplies.
- Reuse envelopes and other packaging that comes to your office.

Once you have reduced your paper consumption and reused wherever possible, you are left with the paper that you have to

use. The key here is using recycled paper and recycling the paper that you use. Producing recycled paper rather than virgin paper use 64 per cent less energy. It also results in 60 per cent less air and water pollution than that which would be produced from production of fine paper. It also saves a lot of trees.

There are several solutions for the problem of how much paper we are using. Some ideas can be implemented right in our own offices, schools, libraries, etc. We know how to reduce our consumption: it would literally be a shame to throw this knowledge away.

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