Office tips: printing best practice

This fact sheet will provide you with the information and tools needed for your business to minimise printing in the office to reduce print costs and your impact on the environment.

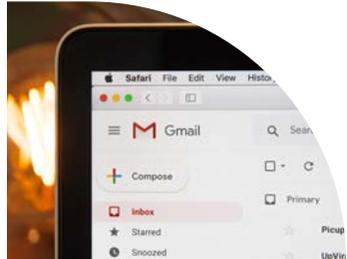## Change staff printing habits

A printing policy to train staff during their induction can guide them to follow best practice.

DID YOU KNOW?
A waste audit of a typical office tower showed that most of the waste stream was recyclable paper. [Source: Resource NSW]

Avoid

Staff's first reflex before printing should be to check if printing is actually necessary.

- Ask suppliers to send invoices by email. Many files can be stored electronically.
- Emails should be kept for online communication only. If print is needed, copy and paste the content to avoid printing long threads or signatures.
- Put a note at the end of your emails so your contacts think twice about printing.
- Send electronic brochures, itineraries and tickets to guests and ask them to show their booking electronically instead of printing the confirmation.
- Use a projector, a TV or computers during meetings.
- Have a system in place for electronic signatures and approvals.

Reduce

Even when you print only essential documents, there are measures staff can take to reduce printing.

- Staff should be trained on how to use the printer settings so that they know how to print double-sided, multiple pages on one page, black and white and in draft mode.
- Reducing margins and font-size can ensure content fits on less pages.
- The company should encourage a sharing culture: two people can share the same documents during a meeting, for example.
- Printing in advance should be discouraged to avoid having unused copies.
- Encourage on-screen reviewing and editing.
- Monitoring the number of pages printed by your business can be efficient to engage staff in taking actions to reduce the amount of printing.

Tip You can monitor your printing directly from your printer or you can use software designed to help organisations manage printing through tracking and monitoring print jobs, such as papercut.com for example.

Reuse

Staff should think twice before throwing away a piece of paper or using a new one.

- It is good practice to have a tray for scrap paper that has only been printed on on one side, so the other side can be used to take notes.

Recycle

Having a recycling program in place is not enough. You need to make sure your staff follow it and that your cleaners are on board too.

- Recycling procedures should be highlighted during induction and signs can help to choose the correct bin.
- Having recycling bins for paper at desks makes it more convenient.
- Purchasing items made with recycled content (e.g., toilet paper, packaging, paper) is a good example that can encourage staff to get on board.

Printer and computer settings

A few changes on your printer and computer can help you minimise the amount of printed documents without relying on staff and can also reduce the energy used for printing.

- Make double-sided and black and white printing the default setting on all computers.
- Have a tray with single-sided printed pages that can be used for drafts.
- Reduce margins and font size on your letterhead or templates.
- Put your printer in sleep/standby mode when not in use to reduce energy use, or at least make sure it's turned off at the end of the day.

Purchasing policy

Your choice of printer, cartridges and paper has an impact on the environment.

Printer

- Buying equipment that is multi-function - if you need it - can help with energy saving (for instance, a printer that can also fax documents).
- If your printer is up for replacement, you may look at buying a printer second-hand and/or search for one with a good energy rating. Choose a printer that takes refillable toner cartridges, prints double-sided, has a draft print mode and goes on standby mode when not in use.

Ink

Don't throw away cartridges. There are a few ways to reuse or recycle them.

- Many manufacturers will have an option to refill your cartridges so they can be reused. Some printers even send them a notification when you've just changed the cartridge so they come and pick it up and bring you a new one.
- If your cartridges cannot be reused, check Cartridges 4 Planet Ark, which provides Australians with a free and easy way to recycle their used printer cartridges.
- If possible, use vegetable-based or solvent-free inks. These inks are more eco-friendly than petroleum-based inks which often contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
- Buy remanufactured toners rather than brand new ones.

Paper

You should be buying, in order of priority:

- **Recycled paper**. Using recycled products is the best way to increase demand for recycling and reduce the use of raw materials, creating a circular economy to reduce deforestation. The highest percentage is the most eco-friendly option.
- **FSC certified paper**. This certification ensures that the forest used to produced the paper is managed sustainably.
- **Paper from environmentally friendly factories**.
- **Chlorine free paper**. Paper can be bleached using chlorine, which is harmful to the environment.
- **Paper with lower density (GSM)**. Lighter paper (70 or 80 instead of 120) is cheaper and uses less wood product and energy for production and transport.

Tip Third-party certifications are an easy indicator that ensure suppliers are following best practice in their industry. You may want to look for these logos, for example:

FSC FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL   SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE SFI-00134   PEFC   ISO 14001:2015