



A BRAVE NEW WALLET FOLDER

Filing and storage: not merely the chronological or alphabetical classification and filing of documents.

BY JANE SMITH

The area of filing and storage today has become a complex one due to a number of changes in the way we work and the way in which organisations are structured. Businesses today are becoming more flexible and decentralised in their structure and their workforce generally more mobile and nomadic. Computerisation and tele-communications are converging technologies, also fuelling this new way of working and giving greater access to information with very little restriction over location.

This month we look at document management and how different types of information need to be managed. This is both from an organisational point of view and one concerning legal implications.

However it is important to put this into context. Lots of research has been undertaken over recent years to determine how our working practices and behaviours are changing and what is likely to happen in the future. To give you an idea here are some 'sound bytes' from recent work undertaken.

MFP manufacturer, Brother undertook a research project with

the Future Foundation (an Experian Company), called Maximising the Benefits of Tele-working to 2020.

Extracts from the executive summary provides this insight:

"We are going to see a massive growth in a different and newer way of working. Described by us as FreE-working, this growth is in the numbers of workers who are going to use technology to work at multiple locations outside of the central work location."

"Our bodies will be our office – we will carry our workplace with us at all times."

"Workplaces themselves will change becoming more a site for collaborative and social interactions rather than for work activity itself."

And concluding:

"We won't go to work in 2020. We will just do work."

Document management experts at Canon found evidence to suggest that organisations are doubling their filing volumes every three years with the average office worker creating 45 pages of new information everyday.

In contrast, Esselte commissioned some work to look into the effects of information

overload. They found that disorganisation tips the balance in the build up of stress.

And Acco have provided us with some interesting statistics to back up the changing way in which we work, which are also being used to drive their new product development:

- Latest DTI survey says working at home almost doubled from 16% to 28% in 2004.
- Average office desks occupied for less than 30% of the working day (Acco research)
- Between 1.3 and two million UK tele-workers in 1999 – estimated to rise to 10% of the UK workforce by 2004 (MORI)
- Nearly 200 million business trips made on rail network in 2001. Average of 2.75 million passengers carried daily. (National Passenger Survey 2001/2)
- European travel – 7.9 million business trips made from UK to other European countries in 2003 (Office of National Statistics)

Business meetings dominate the working day – average 60 per month (MCI)

- A Vodafone survey recently found over 80% of business professionals are equipped for mobile working
- Some 55% of managers will work outside of the office at some point this year (NORTEL).
- UK businesses lost the equivalent of \$8bn in 2004 from 'deadtime' travelling (Ugov)

So for document management, filing and storage what does this tell us? Well, we think it clearly shows the need for us to educate companies and end users to implement good document management disciplines and embrace the innovations available in terms of new product developments from the industry, whether they're paper based solutions or electronic.

Let's just touch on the legal side of things. There are two main considerations. The first is the legal length of time for which records must be kept by organisations. For example, in the UK the Companies Act 1985 (Section 222) requires >>

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companies to keep accounting records sufficient to give a 'true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs and to explain its transactions'. It also requires adequate precautions to be taken against falsification of records and to discover any falsifications that occur. Both the Inland Revenue and HM Customs & Excise provide guidance on record keeping for income, capital gains, corporation and VAT. Retention of records also help to avoid legal sanction or spoliation claims if they become subject to discovery. The second, and of equal importance, is that certain records for reasons of Data Protection should not be retained. Disposal of information also has to be considered very carefully, as there are legal implications for this, as well as the risk of identity fraud which is on the increase. If in doubt, we would recommend calling in the experts.

In terms of managing data we found a good source of information on the Fellowes website www.fellowes.com which provides a guide to document retention.

In managing information first you need to understand that all information you generate has a lifecycle and level of importance to the individual and organisation. There are three stages to consider:

- *Active use and storage*
- *Semi-active and storage*
- *Destruction*

Information can be live, pending or historical. It can be needed on a short, medium or long-term basis. The information might be needed by only one individual or shared by a group of people. It might be information needing to be shared by one department in one location, or by many different people in different locations. Information can also be distributed proactively, pushed out to individuals or accessed by people proactively seeking to use it. Finally, information carries different risks in terms of importance, confidentiality and sensitivity.



Another important factor, particularly for organisations is the cost of ownership of information. For many companies their information is a key asset and, due to volume, the cost of keeping and managing it is now a real factor in determining an organisation's policy for accessibility, availability and protection of information.

All of these factors combine to give a 'picture', which will be different for different organisations. How it is then managed becomes easier to determine and products and solutions available become more relevant. While filing and storage can be looked at from both a personal and an organisations' point of view we thought it'd be useful just to give you some information about a few products launched for 2006 that have been developed with future needs in mind.

First up is the new MO range from Rexel. Conventional filing and storage products simply aren't designed for today's nomadic lifestyles – but Rexel's new MO range most definitely is.

This unique collection of mobile organisational products allows you to work anytime, anywhere – at home, in a meeting or on the move. Stylish, yet functional products that can be used individually or as part

of a mobile or static filing system. Modular design and fashionable colours provides infinite flexibility in how the products are used.

Suspension filing is going mobile too. Take a look at the new Crystalfile Extra Porta range, which combines a traditional suspension file with unique features of portability.

From suspension filing to storage, Bisley Office Furniture, a manufacturer of storage solutions, offers a range of filing cabinets and storage cupboards. Gary Carr, marketing manager told us, "for most companies space is limited and occupancy costs are high. High density mobile storage is the ultimate in space saving solutions. InnerSpace from Bisley is designed for front office use and can either increase storage capacity by up to 100% or give the same storage capacity in 50% less floor space."

Keeping on the traditional theme for a moment let's talk about lever Arch Files. Still a hugely popular filing product, but possibly lacking in innovation? Well, not any more. Leitz, now part of Esselte, developed the original lever arch file and have developed the Leitz 180 degree lever arch file. It has a patented lever mechanism with a slide shoe which allows the lever to be lifted through 180 degrees giving a 50% wider opening. It makes filing more

efficient and manageable and increases filing speeds up to 20%.

As well as the need for mobile filing there is also a trend towards instant filing. Esselte has learned from research that end users are looking for more ways to deal with short term filing. They also learned that two thirds of office workers are involved in project work and 90% of these handle multiple tasks at a time. The Desk Free range of A4 clear polypropylene folders helps to categorise and manage work in progress, allowing users to have their paperwork in sight but their office spaces tidy and uncluttered.

Like these manufacturers many more are developing innovative products to meet future needs whether they are paper based or electronic. Take the Swedish made Ergogrip binder from Guildhall, a very special filing system with a unique opening and closing mechanism and strong pp covers and spine. Nick Parry, director of marketing from UK trade distributors Tollit & Harvey said, "The Ergogrip binder performs equally well in the workshop, office or home and provides either two or four prong secure filing, ideal for day to day active use. They are great for colour coded filing too as they come in eight, either solid or frost colours, and with a five year guarantee."

Writing this feature certainly opened our eyes to the size, complexity and opportunities that are open to us as a result of the changing way in which we all work. So next time you are thinking about your customer's filing and storage needs don't think boring commodity, think exciting new products. Ask loads of questions about what your customer is trying to achieve. Use some of the information in this article to delve into how they want to work. It is then that you can look for the most suitable solutions at which point price should become a secondary issue. ■