

HOW TO... MANAGE YOUR RECORDS

Store it or shred it? Protect your information!

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FOR FELLOWES

We rely on up to date information to support our business activities. It can be a vital asset, but only if it can easily be found and accessed. Even the smallest of businesses are required to keep required records (for accounts, audit, tax, pensions, Health and Safety, etc). In some sectors failure to keep accurate records, or to be unable to locate them, can lead to loss of licence to operate and to business failure. Using the principles of records management can enable you to assess which records need to be retained and which records need to be disposed.

Information is the most important asset to any company but to be effective it needs to be managed properly. The following article aims to give useful tips and also help explain the many benefits to having a systematic approach to managing your records.

PAPERLESS OFFICE

Technology has speeded up at a rate at which we gather and generate information. But it also allows us to share things with lots of other people, or send them copies. Consumption of printer paper increases by around 30% each year. That extra 30% must later either be wasted, or filed away where it takes up 30% more space. That leads to duplication of records, of retrieval effort, and of storage costs.

RECORD HELP

The key benefits of a systematic approach to records management are that information and records will be more reliable, and will enable you to meet your legal and other obligations. They will be categorised and classified according to their subject matter and importance. They will be easy to retrieve



and use and duplication is minimised. Records will not be misfiled, and will be stored in the most appropriate format and medium. They will be properly protected, but they will be disposed of at the appropriate time.

Records life-cycle

The lifecycle of a document can be classified in a number of ways:

- **1. Creation** (as soon as someone decides to keep a piece of information)
- **2. Active** (information that needs to be used regularly or frequently)
- **3. Semi-Active** (information that is not regularly used, but has to be kept)
- **4. Archival** (information that has a long-term, probably historical value)
- **5. Disposal** (this may mean destruction, or transfer to someone else)

For each stage of a document's life there is a product from R-Kive from Fellowes that can be used to safely store or destroy.

For more information and your FREE Records Management handbook contact Fellowes on 01302 836836.

TOP TIPS

5 TOP TIPS FOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT

>> **Know WHAT you have got**
The best way to find out is to conduct an audit – list the types of records and their storage medium, their subject matter, and anything else you need to know to get an overview.

>> **Know HOW MUCH you have got**
Make an inventory of quantities and volumes – how much space do the records in each category occupy, and what type of equipment is used to store them?

>> **Know WHERE it is kept**
Check all possible storage spaces – start with offices (check desks and cupboards), and work outwards to shared and more remote areas (including off-site stores).

>> **Know WHY it is being kept**
If the person holding it cannot justify the need to keep it, they ought not to keep it. More than one person maybe holding the same information. You may find things that others need to know about.

>> **Know HOW LONG it is being kept for.** Aim to minimise the retention period. Confirm the legal, regulatory and business requirements and check that they are being applied. Dispose of confidential material securely by shredding.