# An 8 Step Strategy to Making Your Workplace a Greener Office and Saving Money on Printing and Imaging

By: Gary J. Skalyo

The trend today for companies, organizations and government offices to become more environmentally responsible is encouraging. While motives vary with each different organization, it is fairly consistent that Greener Office practices, with printing and imaging, actually save your company money. Sure, there are some exceptions in the quest for sustainability, but not many.

What most organizations lack is a Strategy for Printing and Imaging. The tips I am making in this paper are components that can be used to form a Good, Money Saving, Environmentally Sustainable Strategy for your business or organization and its Fleet of Printers, MFPs and Copiers.

Print & Distribute Document Flow – Yesterday and Today…
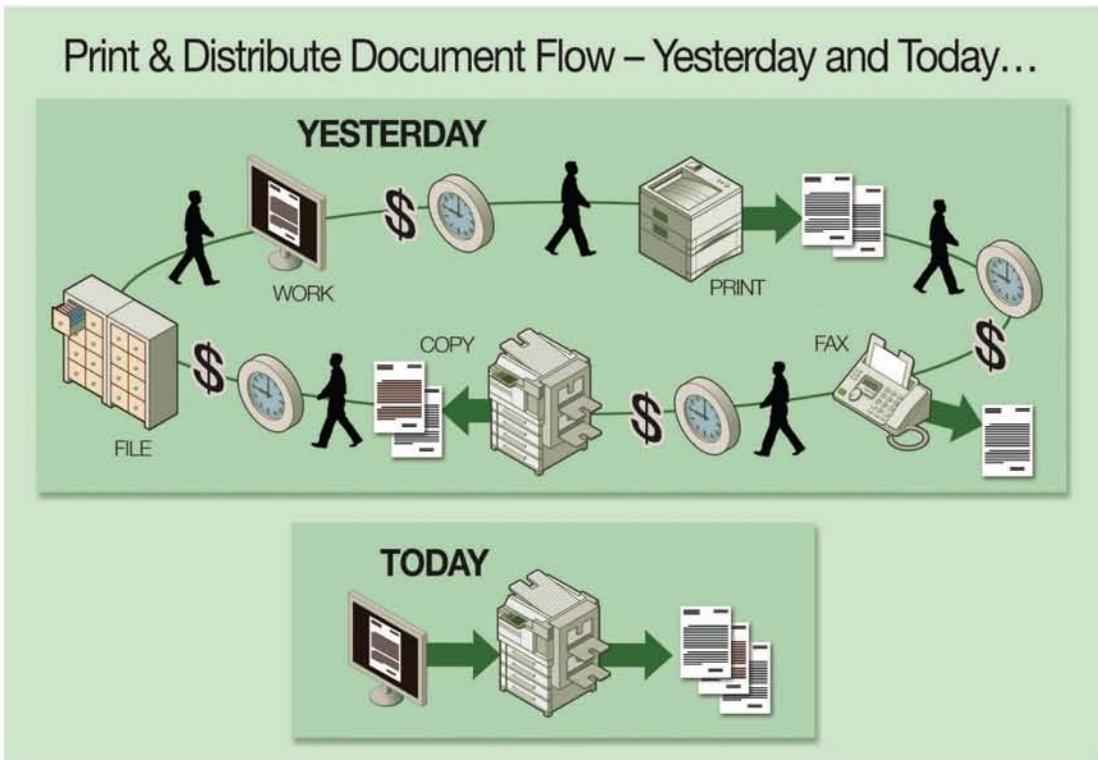
Here are 8 things you can do in your workplace to make it a greener office and save money:

1 **Don't Print- Rather, don't use paper.** Documents today are not always on paper. They still play the same role, but many times a .pdf invoice emailed to a customer or client would be preferable. In my office we actually ask our clients how they prefer their invoices delivered and we encourage email.

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Today's applications like Quickbooks, MS Dynamics, etc make this very easy, you just have to alter your business processes to take advantage of the opportunity to save money and have a greener office. There is also an increasing trend in the workplace for dual monitors. This allows staff to treat .pdf documents like their paper predecessors. The documents data is processed with another application and the document is then stored electronically. The process or workflow is faster, more accurate, costs less money and is sustainable.

Instead of printing to paper, place an emphasis on printing to a .pdf and delivering the documents via email or storing them electronically. Printing, faxing, storing and mailing documents all cost money and have a significant impact on your carbon footprint.

PDF Software (portable document file) is very useful and inexpensive. Sure, Adobe Acrobat Professional has a pretty good per user cost associated with it, and probably worth it, for the full featured functionality. Adobe Reader doesn't allow you to make .pdf files, just read them. There are a number of free programs out there and even Microsoft, Intuit and others are incorporating .pdf writers into their applications.

Again, the real game changer here is changing your workgroups culture and business processes. Look at every routine process that uses a Printer, Copier, MFP (Multifunction Printer), etc., anything that uses paper. And ask yourself how this process can be changed to take less time, not use paper, toner, electricity, etc.

2 **Use Document Management Software** – Since we are on the subject of avoiding paper and it's counterparts as a means of promoting a Greener Office and Saving Money. Let's talk about the cost and environmental impact of printing, filing, storing, retrieving, reproducing lost and destroying paper documents.

Look at any company, organization, institution or government office and you will most likely see a dependence on paper files. Most organizations have a procedure to store and retrieve the paper files. Studies reveal that in an organized system, with an experienced staffer pulling and filing documents, it takes six (6) minutes on average to pull and re-file a document or paper file.

Common examples would be pulling a file every time a check comes in, or an invoice is received and paid. Every time important paper documents are received from outside the company, or produced within the company, they eventually are filed. This occurs with Accounts Recievable, Accounts Payable, Work Orders, Human Resource records and so on.

Of course, more often than not, there is more than one person working with these paper files and information is not always readily available when needed or lost altogether. There is no paper trail, no track ability. This is a tremendously expensive, inefficient and environmentally destructive process, yet most offices still function this way.

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Enter Document Management Software. Otherwise known as Document Storage, Document Imaging or Electronic Filing Solutions. Electronic Filing (and retrieving) is the process of capturing paper and electronic documents, records, etc. and storing them on a server, after being indexed in a database, often called a repository. The documents are then available for retrieval, distribution, annotation, etc. to authorized personnel from anywhere in the world.

The more feature rich Products have compliance features for Hippa and Sarbanes-Oxley as well as security, routing and revision functionality.

I can hear you saying from here, "In my industry, we have to save paper files for X amount of years". I would check again. The Government, Healthcare, Education, Insurance and Financial Industries all have a big push for this easy to use technology.

There is a huge number of Solutions available in the marketplace. Many of them are channel specific. There are companies that provide solutions finely customized at the College/University Space or for Car Dealerships, Medical Offices, etc. There is also a tremendous variety of Solutions available that are suitable for every office and that is capable of being prominent in the workflow for every department and their processes.

There are solutions that vary in cost greatly and much research needs to be done to determine the product ideally suited for your workgroup. But to really make an impact, you need to sponsor the change in culture in your company from paper to electronic. Do this and you will never regret it.

In summary, Document Management costs less than what you are doing right now, is more efficient, safe from fire, theft, etc and eliminates the need for much paper, electricity, toner, etc. Saving you money and making your Office Greener.

3 **Buy Sustainable Printers & MFPs** – And when I say Sustainable, I mean Good. Buy (or lease) very good, robust single function and multifunction printers. Don't buy a device based on its selling price.

A good rule of thumb is the lower the sales price for a monochrome or color laser printer, the higher Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). Typically a small $200.00 - $400.00 printer has a very high cost-per-page (CPP), the toner cartridges are reasonably expensive and hold very little toner. Moreover, these printers if utilized well only have a lifespan of about 100,000 pages before becoming a service/maintenance burden. Of course at that point, it also becomes a material waste and environmental burden.

I'm an HP guy. I know and love the products, for the most part. The lowest-cost, most sustainable Hewlett Packard LaserJet Printers (from a TCO perspective) are the devices with a higher sales cost, typically in the $600.00 - $5000.00 range.

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Now wait a minute, "Did I hear him right"? "The Lowest cost, most sustainable printers, are the printers that cost more, right out of the gate"?

Yes, that is correct. The more robust Printers and MFPs have a much lower cost-per-page, will last forever (with care and maintenance), are highly reliable and have a Best in Class Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). At the end of a 36 month or 48 month term, you will have actually spent less money for your pages and have enjoyed the value of a great device. And you still own it.

Additionally, these Sustainable Printers are often more feature rich via the print driver than the entry level models and allow such money saving and Green functionality as forced-duplex (prints on both sides of the paper) and color restrict (restricting color usage by user, application, time of day, etc) as well as others.

There are two disturbing practices we see in our industry regularly. The first is companies often buy inexpensive printers, MFPs and fax machines that wind up in the garbage in a year or less. The other is good, sustainable devices being retired and replaced before being fully utilized. Both of these wasteful practices do not provide a reasonable return on investment, costing you more money than necessary and are a burden on our planet.

4 **Buy Refurbished Printers & MFPs** - There are a great many large corporations, banks, government offices, etc. that retire and replace Printers & MFPs before they are fully utilized. Of course, this is a big Fiscal and Environmental crime in itself. Though it does create an opportunity for businesses to purchase these pre-owned devices, often refurbished, and enjoy the financial and environmental values that they offer.

Refurbished Printers (printers worth refurbishing) are often robust devices that are highly sustainable; you will own them for years. You normally buy them at a great price, and they typically have a lower cost-per-page than brand new contemporary models. Cost-Effective, Environmentally Friendly, Aftermarket or Remanufactured toner cartridges are almost always available for these models, making them an incredible value from a TCO look back in 3 years.

5 **Repair and Maintain your Sustainable Printers & MFPs** - As I stated, often times Printers & MFPs are retired and replaced unnecessarily before they are utilized. This is often because when a printer is in need of routine maintenance (maintenance kit, roller kit) and sometimes even supplies (drum kit, fuser kit, etc) a decision maker will just say, "buy a new one".

Often, because there is a change over the years in managers at companies, these decisions are made in haste. And after they run out and buy that $400.00 Brother All-in-One, they realize that it is not in the same class as they device they just discarded, a $1500.00 network workhorse. Sure it was a little yellow, but it produced pages, fast, cheap and never seemed to tire.

A Best Practice is to buy sustainable Printers & MFPs and take good care of them. Find and build a relationship with a good, fair, reliable company to keep the device in play. This will cost you less and will better for our earth.

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6 **Use Aftermarket Remanufactured Toner Cartridges & Supplies** - Refurbished, Aftermarket Printer & MFP Toner Cartridges (and maintenance kits) can save you a lot of money. And these remanufactured products use the original petroleum based cartridge shell as well as several other components in the cartridge.

I know, Remanufactured/Aftermarket Cartridges have garnered mixed reviews over the years from various opinions. *The following rationale illustrates the best way to purchase this product from a productive, cost-effective and environmental point of view:*

There are some very good restaurants in this world, of all kinds. There are very good, service oriented, Diners, Taco Shops, Bistros & White Tablecloth Eateries available to all of us. There are also some very unremarkable, poor service and lousy food versions of the same genre, everywhere as well. What always stumps me is why anyone would eat at or even frequent poor restaurants and how do these establishments stay open? I think the answer is they enjoy 1 or 2 visits from each of their prospective diners and never see them again. Relying on new, unsuspecting customers to come in and try their luck.

Aftermarket Laser Cartridge Providers are a lot like restaurants. There are some very good ones, with great cartridge, maintenance kit, service & solution products. Companies that you can depend on to deliver and service your account to insure a cost-effective, sustainable Printing & Imaging Operation in your business. There are also some that provide inconsistent product quality at various levels of service quality as well.

A best practice is to find the company or companies in your area that have what I call Operational Excellence. Firms who are so reliable, responsive and fair, that they become a valuable resource and advisor. They might not have the absolute lowest prices, but the consistent and predictable service and performance levels they provide more than make up for that.

Often times, companies will order the cheapest Aftermarket/Remanufactured Cartridges they can find on the web. Eventually these budget etailers with razor thin margins and no ability to provide meaningful service will not meet their needs or worse. And they go back to expensive, environmentally questionable OEM cartridges, saying "all aftermarket cartridges are bad".

Talk to your friends, suppliers, customers and find the Printing & Imaging Superstars in your area. Use LinkedIn, Twitter or search blogs for the information you need to make a choice. And then when you engage that Printer Company let them know you are interested in the big picture. You need excellent cartridge products and world class service. Most of these specialized providers will deliver just that.

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7 **Use a Print Management Tool** – Often called Remote Monitoring Tool or Proactive Management Tool, these software programs allow IT, Helpdesk and Facilities Maintenance Staff take back control of their time. These tools allow you to proactively and predictivly manage your entire fleet of Printers, MFPs and Copiers, instead of reacting to the interruptions of your colleagues that need toner, maintenance, support or even service.

There are some very good, industry leaders in this space. Printfleet and FMAudit, to name a couple. The business model for these software providers is to distribute seat licenses via distributors. These distributors often sell the seats at $2.00 per month per device, and they often give them away as a Value-Added Premium because of supplies, maintenance or managed service business.

The Tool (software) is very powerful and can provide value to your business immediately and sustainably. Let me list a couple of those features common to Printfleet, FMAudit and others:

Real Time View of your entire fleet of Printers, MFPs and Copiers. Complete with Supply Levels (in graphic detail), Service and Maintenance requirements in a Red Light, Yellow Light, Green Light format. The staffer(s) who manages your fleet can see what needs are going to need to be met in the morning and proactively see to them. This is much more cost effective than the staffer being pulled in many directions without warning throughout the day. It allows them to control their time and be more productive, devoting their day to more meaningful initiatives.

Alerts can be delivered to your email when supply levels are low. You can actually choose at what percentage you want the alerts to arrive at. For example on a color laser printer, you can have the black toner alert you at 20% and the colors at say 10%. This helps you plan and allocate resources.

Report Generation is very valuable for creating reports that tell you how your fleet is being utilized. It shows you the underutilized workhorses and the overworked personal printers allowing you to change printing habits with your staff in an effort to reduce costs and increase sustainability.

There are other reports available from these programs that report power usage for carbon footprint calculation, reports that detail toner usage, reports to reconcile your copier bills, etc. The reporting is very granular and improves over time. You see, your devices normally will tell you how many miles (pages) they have on their various odometers, but they don't tell you when and how you used them.

In summary, A Print Management Tool can help you save money by optimizing the use of your device fleet. Use the right printers for the right jobs. Large jobs go to devices with low cost per page (CPP) and small jobs go to the nearest desktop so staff doesn't have to leave their workspace to retrieve them.

The Tool can provide hours a week to your IT staff that they did not previously have, as they were putting out fires, reactively and never knew when it was coming. The Tool can keep you aware of your energy usage and allow you to monitor and optimize in the big picture of Carbon Footprint Reduction.

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8 **Consider using a Managed Print Services (MPS) Provider** – Managed Print Services is a game changing service that promises a lot of business value for organizations that engage in a meaningful MPS Agreement with a Superstar Service Provider.

The Managed Print Services Association (www.yourmpsa.org) defines MPS as, "Managed print services is the active management and optimization of document output devices and related business processes."

For the purposes of this discussion, I will define Managed Print Services and the Providers of this Service as, Specialists who use a Print Management Tool to remotely monitor and proactively manage the Printing and Imaging Device Fleet for Companies, Organizations, Institutions and Government Agencies.

Typically, these specialists are able to assess and break down all of the core components in your printer, MFP and copier fleet to a page rate. They are then able to provide all of the components (supplies, service , maintenance, support, etc) on a management basis, billing by the page. The management tool makes this process very transparent and it is easy to reconcile a cost-per-page billing scenario.

A lot of the meaningful business value in these multi-year engagements is the fixed, predictable costs (what was formerly an unknown, variable cost), improved cash flow and risk aversion. That's right, MPS Providers assume a lot of the risk that you would otherwise shoulder in a transactional world. How many pages will I get from this toner cartridge? How much does service calls cost? What about maintenance? Page coverage? Etc.

The Financial and Environmentally Sustainability rewards are typically all there, as many of the above practices are what MPS Specialists consider Best Practices and use them in their Managed Print Services Agreements.

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