

Paperless office is unrealistic

British-American information scientist, Frederick Wilfrid, first envisioned a 'paperless office' in 1978 but the reality is that printers continue to be used daily.



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Epson Europe recently conducted an independent survey of over 2,400 employees across the EMEA on 'The State of Printing in the Workplace' and found that 76% of South Africans say the paperless office is unrealistic, 81% consider printing 'vital' in terms of helping them work effectively and 88% said that they considered printing critical to the way their industry operates

With 44% South African respondents printing, on average, more than 10 documents per day, it is clear that office workers still prefer tangible printed documents. The most popular printed items are invoices, closely followed by letters, reports and brochures and email attachments.

"It is clear from our research that – despite digital advances and over 41% of businesses now digitising documents in favour of keeping hard copy records – people still like to work with paper, preferring print rather than working on-screen for certain tasks," says Jeroen van Beem, head of sales, AFIS, Epson Europe.

Waste is limited

South Africans tend to keep and use the documents that they print out, with just 16% saying that they waste or do not use more than 30% of the documents they print out. While this is not to say that print is any less valuable (in fact 33% said that their productivity would decrease if they were no longer able to print), it is a factor that is on the minds of employees, 76% of whom believe that environmental preservation is important.

"The reality is that organisations need print to help employees work effectively, but if they are careful about the technology they choose, they can reap wider productivity and environmental benefits too. By selecting inkjet printers over comparable

laser products, for example, organisations can achieve up to twice as many prints while producing 95% less waste and with much lower energy consumption, of which 65% of businesses in South Africa are still unaware.”

This offers a clear opportunity for businesses in South Africa, 46% of whom do not currently implement IT in a strategic manner and who could be missing out on considerable savings on print costs and environmental impact reductions.

“New technologies are of course changing the way that people work. At Epson, for example, we see this with our wearable and projector-based collaborative technologies. However, when it comes to reading, scanning, editing and sharing documents such as reports, emails, and attachments, office workers, from baby boomers to millennials, still prefer the tangible printed version. Businesses would do well to recognise this and take advantage of opportunities to improve their bottom lines and environmental credentials through the use of carefully selected technologies that can help do just that,” van Beem concludes.

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