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News Feature

Why CIOs Should Care About Rising Printing/Paper Costs

The "Identify and Slash a Major IT Expense" subject line of an e-mail I recently received intrigued me. But the ...

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By Gary Beach

October 01, 2005 — CIO —

The "Identify and Slash a Major IT Expense" subject line of an e-mail I recently received intrigued me. But the content surprised me.

I expected a pitch for application integration, business intelligence or supply chain service. Instead, what I read was a reasonable and rational note identifying paper waste and printing costs as the "largest hidden cost in IT today."

And though this e-mail came from a reputable vendor that is in the business of slashing paper and printing costs, and therefore had a bias, the message nonetheless resonated with me.

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I looked around my office after reading the e-mail. I was surrounded by mounds of paper. And right outside my office is a paper recycling bin where I deposit those irritating last pages of printed Web documents with nothing on them. Why did some tree have to die for this?

Those readers with good memories will recall that about 30 years ago, the industry created the concept of the "paperless" office where all information would be stored and transferred electronically. Throughout the 1980s, the dream environment of the paperless office was always just over the digital horizon.

But in one of the more interesting examples of unintended consequences, the more automated the office became with personal computers, printers and so on, the more paper was created. Each person in the United States, the world's largest consumer of paper, consumes about 749 pounds—more than a third of a ton—of paper each year! And that's before the Sarbanes-Oxley compliance regulations take root.

When CIOs hear "asset management," most think about mission-critical computing devices and software programs. My suggestion: Add your paper bill and printing costs to that list.

Think about it. Do you really know what your printing and paper costs are? As another vendor in the printing market asks, "Does your firm have an output strategy?"

Drop me an e-mail, and I will send you a white paper on the topic—electronically, of course.

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