GO AHEAD, TAKE MY PAPER

> So much of what happens daily in a flower shop is documented on paper and then printed to file away: orders and receipts, delivery logs, even employee performance reviews. If you're like most people, you probably print far fewer documents than you once did, thanks to the advent of laptops, smartphones, tablets and point of sale systems (POS), but you probably still rely on printers and "old fashioned" paper for some important tasks. The question is, do you need to? This month, we'll take a look at a few key areas and provide some insight into paperless options that could help you save time and money.

Farewell Fax. While some suppliers have moved to electronic forms, many wholesalers still utilize faxed price sheets — and occasionally you may have a business client that faxes in orders, or wants to. The solution is an electronic fax service. You can eliminate the cost of a phone line and save money on printer paper by utilizing a service such as eFax.com, Send2Fax.com or MyFax.com. The benefit of a service like this is that all of your incoming faxes are sent to your email as a PDF to view on your computer, tablet or smartphone. And instead of printing a proposal for a bride or faxing a document to a vendor, you can simply send the documents via your electronic fax service. Another great benefit of using an electronic fax service is the ability to create an icon on all your PC desktops so that all employees can fax as needed.

Part with Printers. Another way to reduce the amount of paper in your shop is to reduce the total number of printers — the more printers you have, the more printing you do. Multi-functional printers are user-friendly and often include an option for streamlining paperless functions, including the ability to scan or save documents. There are many models to choose from and several things to keep in mind when selecting a multi-functional printer. For instance, one model I like, is the HP Officejet Pro 8620 e-All-in-One ($199).

Credit card processing via a mobile device can save all kinds of paper and time. Check with your POS provider to see if this is an option. FTD just released mobile credit card processing that categorizes sales based on plants, fresh flowers, gifts and other categories. It can be used in the greenhouse, at the cash register or in the showroom. It's very floral-centric, so all the sales data flows right into your POS.

Smart delivery. Some POS systems offer apps that let you do all of your delivery routing via a smartphone — no more pages and pages of routes and maps! Some systems include delivery confirmations as well — something today's consumers are expecting more and more — and let you send an email to the sender with an offer for a discount on their next order.

Work that POS! If you're really using your point of sale system to its fullest capacity, then you never have to hand-write or print out anything. Those hand-written notes with arrangement codes? Just do a search for an arrangement on your POS, and everything you need is at your fingertips. Some shops don't even print off the order entry form — instead, they have tablet PCs mounted in the design area, where designers can pull up orders. Their rationale? They'd rather spend $900 on a tablet than go through reams of paper. Plus, if you're using your order management system properly, it will show you what's up next in the design cue, and you can indicate when orders are complete. This is not "big shop" activity — in fact, I see many one- and two-person shops go this route out of necessity, because it saves time (printing off, chasing, organizing paper) that they simply don't have. ❀

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