

FUNCTIONAL FASHIONABLE 6

The Pleasure of Paperless

Last month I talked about the beautiful compatibility of organizational tenets and eco-friendly living. Now that you've had a few weeks to donate all the unused stuff from your house, shred and recycle your old files and implement newly conscientious purchasing habits, you're ready to learn how technological advances can further your pursuit of an organized, Earth-loving lifestyle.

The top culprit my clients name when I ask about the sources of their clutter is also a leading enemy of the environment. Heads of household and industry alike agree that they're up to their necks in paper. Fortunately for the environment, this intrusive material is recyclable. But better yet, contemporary technology is replacing the need for the bulk of it in the first place.

Many of the paper items we took for granted as everyday necessities — bills, letters, notepads, photos, books and magazines, even gift cards — are becoming obscure if not obsolete. You need look no further than your own children to see this drastic change.

Kids and young adults today rely almost wholly on electronic solutions for their needs and entertainment. Though some of us mourn the disconnect between our own childhood experience and that of today's youth, we should think of our kids as personal tech experts and recruit them to help us. Apply their skills and knowledge to save time, space and money at home and at work, and preserve natural resources community-wide.

Here are just a few ways you can use technology to reduce paper clutter and its impact on the environment.

- Take a deep breath and a leap of faith, and set up electronic banking. It's simple, secure and unbelievably convenient.
- File things electronically rather than printing them out and stuffing them into hanging folders. Apart from your birth certificate and passport, there aren't many documents that must be in hard copy form these days. Even tax returns and supporting documentation can be saved as PDFs and stored electronically. A strong filing system for documents and emails is all you need

to keep important information stored securely and readily accessible.

- Reserve letter-writing for special messages. Thoughtfully composed email is generally suitable for most communication. Hand-written thank-you notes and other special missives are all the more special when they're rare.
- Send electronic Christmas or holiday cards, especially to acquaintances and business associates. A personally crafted note to close friends and family is one thing, but there's no need to mail out 500 copies of your annual family newsletter. You'll save a whole lot of time, money and trees with this tip.
- Take notes on your smartphone or tablet. Teachers are welcoming electronic note-taking into the classroom. Welcome it into the boardroom, too. And the grocery store and wherever else your day takes you.
- Similarly, take photos of things rather than copying them down. The camera phone feature can be used in a multitude of paper-saving ways. Photograph business cards, fliers, class schedules, coupons, handouts... anything at all that you need to retain.
- Be choosy about which photographs to print out. Even album making and scrapbooking can be done electronically if you're so inclined — and the results are much easier to share that way!
- Invest in an electronic reader such as Amazon's Kindle or the Nook by Barnes & Noble, or start reading on your iPad or tablet. Yes, you'll miss the feel of the pages in your hands at first, but you'll soon get used to your reader. You'll save money on buying books and magazines, and you'll be able to travel with as many books as you wish with only the weight of your reader in your bag. Fewer hard-copy books means more space in your home and less paper used for production. Think about donating your old books to local schools or libraries, where they can be enjoyed by those who can't otherwise access them.
- While you're at it, cut your mail in half by

unsubscribing from catalogues. You can always peruse inventories online if you need something. Otherwise, you'll save yourself lots of paper — and lots of temptation to order things you don't really need.

- Give gifts electronically. Younger people, especially, enjoy gift cards that they can track and use on their smartphones. This is an easy solution for a paper-free gift that grads of all ages will appreciate this season. Apple iTunes and Starbucks electronic gift cards are particularly popular.

I see younger generations becoming even less dependent on paper in the future and investing more and more in resource-saving technological solutions. My dream is that one day, when someone offers me her business card, she will actually be referring to a single printed item with her contact information on it. I'll take a photo and save it directly to my contacts. Or perhaps paper business cards will disappear completely and we'll all have beautifully crafted v-card files to share with one another electronically.

We may be destined for information inundation but, if so, it's better that we swim in searchable cyberspace than in piles... and piles... of paper.



Marin Rose owns and operates Functional, Fashionable, a professional organizing, decorating and home staging company. For more information, visit functionalfashionable.com.



Questions for Marin? Send inquiries to functionalfashionable@gmail.com.

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- Invest in an electronic reader such as Amazon's Kindle or the Nook by Barnes & Noble, or start reading on your iPad or tablet. Yes, you'll miss the feel of the pages in your hands at first, but you'll soon get used to your reader. You'll save money on buying books and magazines, and you'll be able to travel with as many books as you wish with only the weight of your reader in your bag. Fewer hard-copy books means more space in your home and less paper used for production. Think about donating your old books to local schools or libraries, where they can be enjoyed by those who can't otherwise access them.
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