

The Hidden Costs of Paper Forms: What You May Not Have Considered

How Mobile Technologies Can Dramatically Improve
Business Operations while Lowering Costs



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The Risk of The Status Quo

Every manufacturer runs on forms, whether they are for material usage, production tracking, scrap, non-conformance, safety incidence reporting and more.

But paper forms have problems. They pose real challenges to sharing timely and accurate information in today's manufacturing companies.

Leaders in charge of quality and keeping production lines running smoothly should take a critical look at paper-based systems, and the potential upside of going digital.

Key problems with paper-based systems:

1. Expensive.

The cost of printing, updating, filing, storing and managing paper files can be dramatically more expensive than electronic systems. (See High Cost of Paper Files)

2. Slow.

Paper forms are slow for workers to fill out. Time lapses as physical forms are routed for filing, scanning or rekeying. This delays the delivery of critical information to the right location or into the right format for cataloging and decision-making.

3. Inaccurate.

Illegible handwriting, missing or inaccurate information, or rekeying errors degrade the quality of the collected data.

4. Insecure.

Often, physical forms are misplaced or not filed correctly. Not only can this cost companies time and effort searching for information, but when forms contain sensitive information, it puts companies at risk.

5. Difficult to Share.

Information on paper forms is not in a format that easy to share. Often companies take on added time and expense on scanning, rekeying or managing files.

6. Hard to Analyze.

Data on paper forms cannot quickly or easily be assembled and turned into dashboards or reports. This slows the decision-making process and could cost the company competitive advantage or expense it to further risk.

Digitizing forms, by putting them on a phone or tablet, can eliminate all of these problems - and achieve even more.

The High Cost of Paper Files

Consider the following chart from RecordNation. It shows that the cost of using paper forms can be 75% more than the cost of using digital forms.

How much does this all add up to and how much can you save?

Based on a small to mid sized company with 24 filing cabinets and 100 employees each making \$15 per hour, the chart shows costs with and without digital file management.

| Cost Factor | Annual Costs |
|---|---------------------|
| Paper Costs | \$8000 |
| Filing Cabinet Costs | \$8433.73 |
| Space (7 sq. ft. per cabinet @ \$7.50/ft) | \$1265.04 |
| Labor costs without file manager | \$604,800 |
| Total Annual Cost Without Digital Management | \$622,498.77 |
| Labor costs With One Digital File Manager | \$30,240 |
| Total Annual Cost With Digital Management | \$47,938.77 |

That's an annual cost savings of more than \$570,000

The Benefits of Going Digital

Replacing paper forms with digital solutions, such as using mobile apps to collect data, can deliver incredible benefits. As outlined in the cost analysis scenario, companies can realize significant savings on printing, storage and administrative costs associated with paper. Now that the information is digital, it can easily be shared electronically or written to a database.

In addition to these improved results, going digital can also offer additional advantages.

Digitization can help fill worker knowledge gaps.

Digital forms can walk less experienced employees through an intelligent workflow that triggers an alert or work order if data falls outside preset parameters.

One Alpha Software client created a quality assessment form that uses documentation saved on the smartphone to identify when part failed to meet quality standards. It would then notify the new team member when parts needed to be scrapped.

Digitization can provide richer, more accurate data.

Mobile apps can leverage smartphone capabilities to scan information and capture photos, automatically record times and locations, or perform calculations based on the entered data.

In one example, a seafood processing company used a digital form that automatically filled in dates, performed calculations, and conducted sanity checks on the values that were collected in the app.

The organization could also capture photos and conduct interviews with employees on the production line. Employing apps provided the Company with a new level of accuracy and information for the organization.

Digitization can help managers spot trends and make better decisions faster.

Once it's electronic, data can power faster reporting and data visualization to allow managers to better understand the data, see outliers and take quick action.

For example, one manufacturer that went paperless spotted a trend in data between outdoor humidity levels and defects in injection molding pieces. Knowing that information saved the company many thousands of dollars in raw materials.

The Benefits of Going Paperless

1. Reduction in Paper and Printing Costs
2. Savings on Office Space and Storage
3. Faster Data Collection
4. Richer, More Accurate Data
5. More Collaboration Between Employees
6. Instant Data Availability and Sharing
7. Faster Time to Data Insight and Action



"Previously, I could spend hours looking through boxes of paper for information needed for my root cause analysis. Now I can just search by date and pull up the form pictures. It's helped tremendously."

John Ng

Manager of Quality Control, Igloo Coolers

Starting the Move to Digital

You can get all the benefits of going paperless even if you don't have a high-powered development team or a sophisticated document management system.

No-code app builders allow manufacturing teams without development resources to build mobile forms that collect rich data and work on any smartphone or tablet.

Where will you find the best tool for moving to digital forms?

At Alpha Software, we offer solutions for manufacturers that want to digitize and automate, and we do it from a position of experience. We know that everyone's general needs may be the same, but the magic is in the details.



Alpha TransForm software can leverage the latest mobile features (camera, GPS, etc.) for fast, accurate data collection, such as safety checks or inspections.

The resulting apps will work with or without a WiFi connection or cell signal, are optimized for one-handed data entry, and can integrate with your existing datasource, MES or ERP. Apps can be modified and updated in minutes, to quickly respond to business changes or field needs.

The Alpha TransForm no-code app builder includes app templates you can easily customize to match your process or we can help you configure a solution.

With a powerful API unique scripting capabilities - we can help you configure a solution that perfectly matches your needs. And our patented offline technology means workers can always be productive even when no WIFI or internet connection is available.

We can answer questions or set you up with a risk-free evaluation, pre-configured to your needs.

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With Alpha TransForm you will...

- Make Better Decisions
- Support Field Workers
- Promote Safety
- Improve Quality
- Ensure Compliance
- and Gain Efficiencies

Why?

Because TransForm enables you to...

Get Real Time Data - Catch Errors Sooner - Use Business Analytics - Work Offline - Keep Records Organized - Perform Safety Audits - Perform On Site Lookups - Track Process End to End - Automate Workflows, Save Time & Money, and so much more.

