

How To Develop a Document Management Plan

All businesses have documents, whether electronic or on paper. These documents are also considered assets to the company. From these documents, reports are made and analyzed and will influence important business decisions. Since there are two types of documents to be managed, a document management plan should be developed to effectively organize them.

Developing a document management plan basically involves the following steps:

1. **Imposing standards in creating documents.** Businesses have different documents that keep piling up every single workday. Examples of these are sales invoices, payment notices, receipts, balance sheets, spreadsheets, and sales reports. For these documents to be highly organized, there should be an existing format or standard in creating them. Decide upon the format or template to be used in each document. Create a standard procedure on sharing or reviewing the documents. Finally, make sure that everyone involved in producing business documents are oriented in the standards that you have imposed.
2. **Decide on a document storage procedure.** Paper documents have a greater chance of damage, and it would be best to do document scanning and document imaging to also have an electronic copy of these documents. Now that you also have electronic copies of your paper documents, you can decide on the physical aspect of document storage. Paper documents can be stored in filing cabinets, while electronic documents can be stored on a computer or a computer server. Either way, what is important is that you have a predetermined way of effectively filing and retrieving your documents. Lots of money and opportunities will be lost when needed documents are hard to find, mind you. Next, decide on a procedure on how you will archive your business documents. For example, at the end of the year, you can compile all kinds of documents in just one big folder or binder and label it with the year it was created. For electronic documents, you may just create a folder in your computer labeled with the year and move all electronic documents there categorized by type.

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3. **Create a file retrieval system.** Once again, know that time and money may be lost when staff find it hard to retrieve a file. A good document retrieval system will be achieved if the document storage procedure you have developed is effective. Another way to prevent problems in document retrieval is to create a file location

list. This is a list that is printed and posted at every workstation in the company. Specify both the drive and folder in the computer or the filing cabinet where a specific document can be found.

4. **Think of ways of keeping your documents secure.** This would mean installing security systems in your establishment and securing all possible points of entry. Set a schedule for periodic backing-up of files, and designate a drive where the back-up files will be stored. Do not store your back-up files in the same hard-drive where the original electronic files are stored.