

Insurance Corporation of British Columbia: Managing Paperwork, Printers, and People



Historically, ICBC has been a major consumer of printer and photocopier paper. Now a province-wide initiative, combining better technology and practices, has reduced paper-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 31 percent from 2007 to 2017, in a way that perfectly aligns with organizational goals.

Project Summary

In 2010, when ICBC decided to improve their sustainability in the area of paper use, there were two main streams of focus: i) switching to 100% post-consumer content paper for internal print jobs, and ii) implementing new technology across the organization that could increase the use of electronic documentation.

Shifting to post-consumer content paper and reducing the volume of print jobs became the main focus for internal paper use. In preparation for the transition, ICBC tested their printers to ensure they were running efficiently, without frequent paper jams, and rolled out communications to staff that included tips on how to reduce paper use.

By 2017, ICBC was already seeing a 31% reduction in 8.5 x 11 office paper use compared with 2011. In 2016, they conducted a thorough analysis of the number and use of printers in the organization, and were able to reduce the number of machines by almost a third. Newer and more efficient printers replaced older, energy-inefficient printers. Printers were also set to default duplex printing. In 2017 a print release program was added to the mix, to require that people physically go to the printer in order to activate their job. This is expected to further reduce paper waste, by reducing the number of 'orphan' print jobs left unclaimed at machines.

Meanwhile, modernization of ICBC's computer systems was under way. This enabled the organization to process customer documentation electronically and digitize more files, documents and information brochures. As well, ICBC worked with external vendors to implement electronic file transfers and e-post more business interactions.

The overall result has been significant savings, not only in paper consumption but also energy use and GHG emissions.

GHG Reductions & Savings

- Between 2007-2017, ICBC reduced GHG emissions by 31%, attributed in part to a decrease in paper consumption and switching to 100% post-consumer content paper for internal print jobs.

Benefits

- Reduction of transportation required from vendor to distribute paper packages
- Reduction of packaging required to ship packages
- Reduction in office paper contributing to a reduced demand for paper production
- Energy savings realized from fewer printers running, and running for less time
- Less paper waste created, resulting in reduced tonnage of paper to be picked up and shredded; associated reductions in cost and emissions from transportation
- More online sharing of documents, internally and externally



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Making the Case

Changes on this scale require organization-wide commitment. ICBC's Executive Environment, Health and Safety Committee gave its support to the project early in the process. The technology upgrades were already part of a much larger corporate-wide modernization initiative that had the additional benefit of reducing the corporation's reliance on paper.

ICBC's Sustainability Department pushed out communications to employees through the intranet, blogs and emails, to bring awareness and attention to key environmental issues, including paper and energy use.

Results

ICBC has established four strategic goals that it strives to incorporate into every business decision, and the project has dovetailed nicely with these goals:

- i) Deliver value and service for customers – The changes in systems technology have made policy transactions less complex and time-consuming, and more accessible online.
- ii) Deliver operational excellence – Using the new technology and processes, ICBC work teams have updated many procedures to become more efficient, with fewer extra steps or duplication.
- iii) Maintain financial stability – The paper project has reduced costs, helping to keep insurance rates as low as possible.
- iv) Align people and business capabilities – By modernizing and improving processes, ICBC has been able to leverage people and technology to better serve their customers.

ICBC's investment in new technologies, coupled with the adoption of an operational excellence strategy that incorporates sustainability, has allowed ICBC to become more efficient and lean without compromising output or customer service.

Lessons Learned

1. Paper is tangible, and waste is visible. People who don't usually think about sustainability can easily wrap their heads around a project like this.
2. There is no 'one size fits all' in paper use. It's essential to learn about different business divisions and how they use paper. For example, at ICBC, much of the paper printed for legal purposes has to be single-sided. Requiring that everybody print duplex by default proved not to be a good strategy.
3. Make the changes that are easy to make, such as defaulting to duplex on printers where it fits operational needs. Then look at behaviour change tactics to curb paper use, and address intentional choices of duplex versus simplex printing.



Related Resources & Links

- ICBC Environmental Sustainability, Corporate Website
<http://www.icbc.com/about-icbc/community-relations/Pages/environmental-commitment.aspx>
- ICBC Carbon Neutral Action Report
<https://www.icbc.com/about-icbc/community-relations/Documents/carbon-neutral-action-report.pdf>
- Create a paperless office, Action Framework
<http://www.globalstewards.org/paperless-office.htm>
- Business Guide to Paper Reduction (Forest Ethics)
<http://sustainability.tufts.edu/wp-content/uploads/BusinessGuidetoPaperReduction.pdf>
- Environmental Paper Network Case Studies
<http://www.environmentalpaper.eu/projects/about-shrinkpaper/case-studies/>
- World Wildlife Foundation, Paper Reduction tips
PDF: http://d2ouvy59p0dg6k.cloudfront.net/downloads/final_paper_saving_tips.pdf
Website: http://wwf.panda.org/how_you_can_help/live_green/fsc/save_paper/office_paper/

Government Funding Programs

- B.C. Government, PSO Funding Information
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/climate-change/public-sector/resources>

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