

The 3 Things Killing Your Title Co.



MANDRIEN CONSULTING GROUP
REAL ESTATE SERVICE INDUSTRY

The 3 Things Killing Your Title Company

We'll tell you what they are right now:

Paper, Phones and Email.

Yes, you read that correctly. Those three tools, breakthroughs for human productivity at their respective inceptions, are probably slowing you down, wasting your time and having a negative effect on your bottom line.

If you want to compete in the contemporary business world, you have to go paperless and learn to use phones and email with extreme selectivity. This means conducting a thorough workflow analysis of your company, and implementing business process optimization solutions. Fortunately, this does not have to be as complicated and expensive as it sounds.

Paper, Phones and Email in the Title Industry

The settlement services industry, unlike many other business sectors today, is still bogging itself down with paper documents. It is also an industry that relies far too heavily on telephonic communication and email, resulting in untold waste of time and money.

Although paper, phones and emails may be necessary and beneficial under certain circumstances, in the context of a processing center environment, they are probably killing the potential of your title insurance company. A careful workflow analysis implemented by an expert can help you assess your company's weaknesses and optimize your process for efficiency.

“Where is the Jones file?!”

Have you ever heard an employee frantically demand, “Where is the Jones file?! It's closing in twenty minutes, and something needs to be corrected!”

Then, an email goes out to the entire company: “Where is the Jones file? Find it now!”

Suddenly every single one of your employees is hunting madly for the Jones file. Suppose you have twenty employees, and it takes twenty minutes to find the Jones file. If this happens twice a month, you have effectively lost 160 hours of operating time. The opportunity cost of that drill is even higher, because now your employees are also lagging behind on their normal workload because of the time they have wasted looking for the Jones file. They become overwhelmed by requests like these, and they may be more prone to mistakes and frustration, which can lead to further inefficiency and a decline in the quality of your customer service.

The hard truth is that traditional methods of storing and sharing business information are frequently counterproductive. In order to remain competitive, your title insurance company must strike a careful balance of selective communication.

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This means that you must understand exactly how your business process functions. Then you must determine what types of communication to use, when and how to use them and how to prevent them from becoming a distraction for your employees. For many companies this means going completely paperless and severely restricting employee phone and email use.

Shocked?

We were too. Read on to find out how we overcame our initial doubts and put these clever efficiency methods to use in the title industry.

Going Paperless

There is an ongoing debate in the business world about the paperless office. Going paperless can be a truly unsettling prospect, particularly for an industry as paperwork-heavy as title. But almost every process that takes place in the title industry can be performed electronically; it is simply a matter of implementing the most effective paperless channels available.

Before we consider those channels, we will lay out the major reasons for going paperless, just in case you are not convinced yet.

Consider your own workspace. If it is anything like the majority of desks, it is probably buried in paper documents, many of them very important. When was the last time you or one of your employees lost something important (like the Jones file, for example)? It probably happens on a weekly basis in even the most organized of companies. This is because paper storage by its very nature creates organizational challenges that hinder business.

“Mistakes are made when distractions are the norm.”

You probably already appreciate the annoyance-factor of losing a document, but have you considered the monetary loss? It might seem minor, but when a document is misplaced, the time and effort spent to prepare it and the physical paper used to print is doubled. The average misfiled document costs a company \$125, and the average lost document can cost between \$350 and \$700, according to The Paperless Project. Moreover, if that missing document finally turns up, oftentimes it must be shredded for security reasons. If it is never found, that document can remain a threat to your company's security. Moreover, physical documents are vulnerable to accident and disaster. A flood or fire could easily destroy an entire office full of documents. These are just a few of the hidden costs of a paper-reliant workplace.

It is also worth noting that every year millions of documents are rejected due to missing information and poor penmanship. Human errors like these within a business process can cost thousands of dollars in both labor and materials over the course of a fiscal year.

Then there are the supply costs. One small company can easily spend hundreds of dollars on the material cost of paper and toner. At very large companies, this number sometimes explodes into the hundreds of thousands. According to The Paperless Project, one four-drawer file cabinet holds an average of 10,000 to 12,000 documents, takes up to nine square feet of floor space and costs \$1,500 per year. How many filing cabinets does your office have?

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Paper is difficult to organize because it must be manually categorized and physically stored. Electronic data-storage systems can automate filing and retrieval, as well as provide employees with access to that data at any time of the day or night. Documents can even be accessed remotely if the proper systems are in place. Electronic document storage creates potential for significant revenue increases. It also just plain saves time, and, as we all know, time equals money. That is the bottom line.

Even if we ignore the possibility of misplacement or disaster, the simple cost of sending documents through the mail can become prohibitively expensive. Postage rates are constantly on the increase.

Moreover, the many documents requiring signatures that are still sent through the mail are exposed to mistakes by the postal system. They may be lost or late, causing security concerns and financial loss for your company.

Ten years ago, in 2000, electronic and digital signatures were deemed officially valid. That should have been the last real hurdle to the paperless movement, and yet many companies (and entire industries) have still not hopped on the electronic bandwagon. Today all types of documents can be sent and received instantaneously and (almost) cost-free through the internet. What is stopping businesses from going paperless?

“Business process optimization, [is] a solution that helps a company minimize waste and mistakes while maximizing profit.”

Finally, for the environmentally conscious among you, the paperless effort is a simple way to make your company “greener.” Improving the efficiency of your business and saving money on paper materials are important commercial advantages, but the benefits of these changes will extend far beyond your business. You will save fuel, eliminate waste and preserve trees, which enhances the quality of the environment that we all share. Going paperless has the added benefit of giving you a competitive edge in a market that now cares a lot about supporting green business.

Let it Ring

There are few things more distracting than a ringing phone.

Imagine that you are diligently focused, about to complete a task for a client. Suddenly your phone begins to ring, shrill and persistent. When you pick up, you discover that it is a furious customer, demanding your assistance. Naturally, you tend to the customer. The problem is that when you have finally resolved the issue and hung up, you have probably lost your focus. Perhaps you move on to another task, forgetting to complete the previous one. Or maybe you just forget an important detail. Mistakes are made when distractions are the norm.

The telephone can be a wonderful communication tool in certain circumstances, but for many employees in a title company, answering the phone can be a damaging distraction. In terms of productivity, only one issue can be resolved at a time over the phone. In a title processing facility, employees' time is better spent processing data than trouble-shooting individual complaints. Leave the trouble-shooting to the trouble-shooters! (More on this in a moment.)

The telephone can also be one of the most inconvenient methods of communication. Between computers and mobile technology, people often do not accept every phone call that comes in, particularly if the caller's number is unrecognized. There are also time constraints for the appropriateness of a phone call. You often have to keep in mind time zone differences and personal accommodations (like not calling too early or too late or on weekends.) Moreover, voicemails annoy many people and may go ignored for days, resulting in communication delays.

Of course, in any service-oriented business, quality customer service means consistently open lines of communication, including telephone support. But the real question is who should be answering those phone calls. Who are the ideal trouble-shooters?

Well, that depends on your company and its clients. If the questions being posed are simple and can be answered by anyone with a modicum of training, then it does not make sense to waste high-paid employees' time by asking them to answer the phone every time it rings.

There are a lot of options for efficiently rerouting calls to other people. In a small shop, a secretary is one option, though a mere "switchboard operator" may not solve the core phone-related problems. Instead, you might want to train this person to serve as a gateway. He or she should be equipped to answer all simple, routine customer requests, and should not pass phone calls on to busy employees.

The most effective way to deal with phone call overload is through an in-house call center employing highly skilled title professionals whose sole function is to answer questions. Utilizing the call center approach is an excellent way to provide customers with the means to resolve issues rapidly without interrupting employees who are busy processing title. Call centers are a great way to service existing customers and reinforce consumer-centric branding. Professionally-trained title professionals in call centers can be available in shifts, covering all hours, even for national companies. This enhances your services by giving customers access to answers outside of traditional business hours.

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Call centers can also be structured to accommodate fluctuations in business due to seasonal spikes or unexplained peaks in call volume. This is a fantastic example of business process optimization, a solution that helps a company minimize waste and mistakes while maximizing profit.

Email Overload

Email is probably one of the greatest technological advances of our century, especially for the business world. As a medium, email allows people to send and receive documents instantaneously, at little to no cost. It has ushered in a new opportunity to advertise and market without expensive printing and mailing campaigns. Email also allows customers to give companies feedback quickly and easily, and permits companies a reasonable amount of time to do their homework and respond appropriately to complex inquiries.

Its simple and cost-effective nature has made email extremely popular, and this popularity has in some instances led to an unmanageable abundance of email. The fact that email is cheap (or free) and can be sent silently leads to a “no hesitation” mindset for the sender. Therefore, emails are sent more frequently, often leading to overflowing inboxes. We all know the feeling of “drowning in email.” A company can only process so many opportunities and requests in a given day, and a particular employee can only process the ones he or she has the expertise to address. The onslaught of emails at companies unequipped to handle them can result in neglected customers and a negative corporate image, as well as increasing employee frustration.

This is another great example of how workflow analysis can lead to process improvement. Email is a great direct tool for the company-to-customer relationship, but it must be managed carefully. It can quickly become a full-time job for a business to filter out mail containing time-sensitive requests from less urgent client communications.

Email is certainly a universal staple of communication for our era, and it is not going anywhere anytime soon. In order to benefit from its positive aspects and minimize its negatives, companies must find efficient ways to weed out harmful, useless and irrelevant content, as well as to prioritize responses based on time sensitivity.

This can only be done by placing constraints on the types of emails that each employee receives and processes, and implementing systems that keep channels of communication open and running smoothly without wasting valuable employee time.

“A well thought-out email system ensures that customers receive the kind of timely response that they deserve and thus remain loyal to your company.”

Companies must utilize technology to reroute emails to the correct department, then have that email “mapped” into the appropriate file in the software. Emails must be assigned levels of urgency and placed in queues for the proper employee. Only then will your company be able to prioritize urgent versus non-urgent requests. Implementing a system like this keeps your employees from reactively responding to every email that pops into their inbox. It keeps email from being a distraction to your employees and allows them to focus on their respective jobs. Finally, a well thought-out email system ensures that customers receive the kind of timely response that they deserve and thus remain loyal to your company.

So What Next?

If you're ready to take the next steps toward a paperless, phoneless and email-free company, Mandrien Consulting Group provides expert consultation to get your business running as efficiently as possible. We can run workflow analysis to determine your trouble spots. With many affordable options ranging from rapid impact projects to large-scale overhauls, Mandrien can then create custom business process optimization solutions that help your company implement cutting-edge technology and operation systems, allowing you to prioritize the demands of your business with ease.

Please feel free to explore Mandrien's offerings on the web at www.mandrien.com, email us at mscarborough@mandrien.com or give us a call today at **(917) 338-4222**.

