

A Place for Everything

My mother was very fond of the saying “a place for everything, and everything in its place”. I didn’t pay a great deal of attention at the time and, truth be told, I’m not much tidier now. However, when it comes to storing information on computers in the 21st century, the old adage still applies.

Before computers a great deal of effort went into designing filing systems to hold vast quantities of paper. The problem of space is now greatly reduced, but the need for logical and structured storage is, if anything, greater.

What’s in a name?

The basic principles still apply:

- Only file what you need to (most of us tend to hoard, and because computer documents take so little space hoarding has become even easier).
- Separate (both in your mind and on your disk) documents with different requirements. One such separation would be temporary documents, working documents, filed documents and archived documents. No doubt there are others
- Define a standard naming structure and stick to it
- Define a structure for folders which is both logical and easy to navigate

Power to search

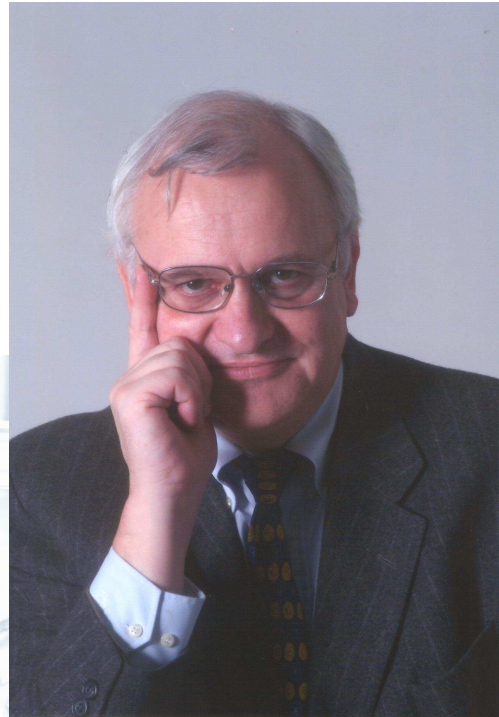
Given we are talking about computerized systems, use their power and flexibility to “enhance your filing and retrieval experience”. Consider software such as Google Desktop to help find obscure stuff quickly. You can cross-file – that is file the same document in a number of places – although it is probably best not to go too far. You can consider scanning paper documents and storing the scanned document in the computerized filing system. You can create links and shortcuts to folders allowing, say, sales and accounts to view the same invoices.

Will I lose everything?

The contents of your files are likely to be very important to you. Having them on a computer gives you opportunities that were not available to the designers of paper-based filing systems – you can make your system resilient to fire, earth-quake, war, riot, and even, dare one say (some) acts of God. You just need to choose the right backup technology and, more importantly, use it.

Reap the benefits

A properly organised filing system makes it much easier to access the information you (and others) need in a timely manner. Take some time to define a system for you or your company and you will reap the rewards more quickly than you might expect.



ITSolve have produced a help-sheet covering this subject in much more detail. If you would like a copy simply email itmatters@itsolve.co.uk or download it from www.itsolve.co.uk/HelpSheets

This article was originally published in the Newbury Weekly News Business Review in April 2006.

Charles Zealey is a consultant working with business professionals helping them to improve their organisation's productivity and effectiveness with the use of Information Technology. Typically a return on investment can be achieved with 6-12 months. To access help sheets go to www.itsolve.co.uk/HelpSheets/. For a free half-hour consultation on business IT issues phone 01635 869863 or email lisa@itsolve.co.uk.

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