



Small Office Managers Struggling to Keep Up New study finds administrative staffs stretched thin, need productivity solutions

PALO ALTO, Calif., Nov. 9, 2009 – As the economic turnaround begins to take hold, almost a third of all office managers and administrative assistants report they are working longer hours in an effort to keep up at work, while only a quarter report no significant impact on their workloads.

According to a recent survey of U.S. administrative personnel, half are prioritizing their work as the primary means of coping with the increased workloads brought on by the down economy, while 31 percent are working extended hours.

“Office managers are increasingly charged with maintaining workplace efficiency, both fiscally and physically,” said Deb Morgaina, owner of Avalon Consulting Office Organization & Management. “That’s increasingly difficult as cost cutting has left them with fewer resources and more responsibility. As a result, they need solutions that will deliver value and make them more productive.”

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Cost vs. value

“For years, HP has been dedicated to providing SMB customers with more productive, more reliable solutions to help them be more successful in the market,” said Larry Trevarthen, marketing director, Imaging and Printing Group, HP. “This study reinforces the strong need for such solutions – now more than ever – offering greater insight into how the economy has impacted administrative personnel and their decision making.”

For example, 38 percent of respondents thought not having adequate supplies for office equipment would be the biggest failure in the eyes of their boss or co-workers, more than the 21 percent who thought overspending on supplies would be most problematic.

“Office managers realize that a lower sticker price doesn’t always translate to long-term value,” said Morgaina, an office productivity expert with more than 15 years of experience. “I know from personal experience when I tried using generic ink and toner for my printers, not only did I encounter problems keeping my equipment working, I didn’t save any money because they only printed half as many pages as the original.”

In addition, a 2007 QualityLogic study that found an average of 33.8 percent of the generic remanufactured cartridges tested failed, either right out of the box or prematurely.⁽¹⁾

“Knowing how office managers view the office supplies purchasing decision helps us better communicate which HP printers will best meet their needs and how HP Original

supplies can help them be more productive,” said Trevarthen.

Increasing productivity and value

Morgainia suggests other ways office managers take inventory of their daily office procedures and equipment to ensure that they are not only the most cost effective practices, but also produce the greatest return. Her top tips include:

- Don't be “penny wise, pound foolish.” Shopping around for the lowest cost doesn't always save money and may cost you more in the end. Buying second-hand equipment, generic toner, etc. won't significantly improve the bottom line, but could increase frustration among managers and co-workers. Product failures could create bigger problems.
- Analyze your office supply consumption. Knowing how much your office uses and how often can save both time and money. Most supplies reordering can be scheduled on a regular basis. Be sure to inventory infrequently used supplies so you know what's on hand for special projects. Bulk order items that can be stored for longer periods.
- Reduce intervention on low-priority items. Group employee trainings and limit vendor visits to a certain days and times so that you don't have to constantly disengage from high-priority tasks to take care of low-priority ones.
- Keep a clean desk top. A messy desk screams, “Help, I'm over my head here!” Every item that hits your desk should have a specific place to go.

Top priorities

The survey uncovered several other interesting findings including:

- Thirty-seven percent agreed billing, invoicing and bookkeeping were the most important tasks.
- Employee training, facilities management and vendor management were among the least important tasks.
- Twenty-three percent reported making decisions faster, while only 6 percent report delaying decisions until the last possible moment.
- Reception/visitor management (19 percent), employee training (16 percent) and record keeping (13 percent) are the most disliked tasks.

About the survey

The survey, commissioned by HP and conducted by ICR, polled 201 office managers and administrative assistants Sept. 10-14, 2009, across the United States about their attitudes and behaviors toward their job priorities in this economy.

More information regarding the ICR survey results and HP's recommendations is available by contacting Perrin Dent at Porter Novelli (perrin.dent@porternovelli.com).

About Avalon Office Organization & Management Consulting

Founded in 1993, Avalon Office Organization & Management Consulting assists a variety of clients with establishing or converting to new accounting systems; management consulting and services; office crisis preparation; and file organization, process mapping and workflow design. More information is available at



http://avalonconsultingaz.com/Avalon_Consulting/Home.html.

About HP

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⁽¹⁾ QualityLogic, Reliability Comparison Study: HP LaserJet Toner Cartridges vs. North American Remanufactured Brands, November 2007.

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