

A better way to keep track of paperwork

If you had to venture a guess, how much time would you say the average American wastes dealing with paperwork each week?

Before you answer, keep in mind all those incoming and outgoing contracts and purchase orders you handle on a daily basis at work, permission slips for the kids' field trips and extracurricular activities, progress reports you have to sign for school, etc.

"Lost count yet?" asks Jeff Zwelling, a businessman from California. He got so tired of the constant struggle of tracking down signed agreements and other papers having to do with his lighting business, he decided there had to be a better way to keep things organized. He couldn't find one, so he and a friend developed one themselves.

EchoSign is a free document management service that allows users to easily keep track of documents - those being worked on, those that need signing and those that have already been signed and need to be kept someplace accessible but safe. "As we were developing the system for ourselves, we realized the potential to help others and decided to put it out there for everyone to use," says Zwelling.

Eric Pfeiffer, a contemporary designer from Oakland, Calif., is glad they did. "It's important to me to do what I do best, stay creative, not spend my time chasing down paperwork and nagging my clients. As soon as I found EchoSign, it changed my business radically by simplifying it," he says.

Pfeiffer juggles multiple clients at any given time, producing products for them in different categories - furniture, housewares, toys and/or lighting. He uses the EchoSign service to keep track of his contracts and invoices.

"In the short time the system has been available (since December

2005) we've received positive feedback not only from businesses, but individuals using the system to manage information," says Zwelling. "I know of people using EchoSign to keep track of all their financial and insurance papers, school coaches using it to keep track of permission slips they need back from parents, and there are even several homeowner associations using it to make sure residents are aware of upcoming projects. It's amazing how far reaching it has become."

Getting an agreement signed through EchoSign is as easy as sending out an e-mail. Users simply send an agreement that needs to be signed through EchoSign.com. The recipient then receives an e-mail with the agreement attached, and just signs and faxes the agreement back using the enclosed EchoSign fax cover sheet. That's it. Upon receiving the fax, EchoSign automatically e-mails signed copies of the agreement to all parties by a PDF.

EchoSign also offers a free easy-to-use e-signature service that enables two or more people to electronically sign any document instantly for free, if all you really need is a "click-to-agree." With EchoSign e-signature's service, legally binding electronic signatures are instantly delivered in PDF format to both sender and recipient.

The EchoSign service is free for the average user- people who need to manage 20 documents or less. For more frequent use, the cost is minimal, just \$12.95 a month for unlimited number of documents.

"I envision this service as one that will revolutionize the communications industry," says Zwelling. "Pretty soon, people will be saying EchoSign it to me as often as they request an e-mail."

If you'd like to test the system out for yourself, all you have to do is log on to www.echosign.com and establish a free account. ♦

- ARACONTENT

Fall Fashion Trends for the Workplace and Beyond

Kids going back to school and a chill in the morning air signal it's time to start thinking about your fall wardrobe. Now is the time to add a few trendy pieces to your closet as well as restock the basics.

Whether your office attire is "work casual" or more traditional, the good news is that today's work wardrobes allow women to express their individuality. The padded-shoulder power suit is a thing of the past. Looking professional doesn't mean wearing only navy blue pinstripes.

Here are some of this season's hottest looks that will take you not only to work, but also to soccer practice and a night on the town:

* The perfect white blouse

- No wardrobe should be without this staple that can go with everything from a business suit to blue jeans. This fall, style is all in the details. "Look for blouses that have that special something: a side tie, a great ruffle or rouching," says Melinda Anderson of ShopNBC. Shoppers at the television and online retailer will find plenty of beautiful Finley blouses to choose from to fill this need in their wardrobe.

* The easy-to-wear jacket - On busy mornings, a great jacket or blazer makes it easy to look put together even in the face of a chaotic day. "The right jacket makes an outfit look instantly pulled together," says Vanessa Keller. Texture, color and details are key this year. You'll see jackets and blazers in fabrics ranging from leather and suede to velvet. Choose a jacket that coordinates with items already in your wardrobe.

For example, if you wear a lot of black, a beautiful blue or red leather blazer will make the black pop. Keller also reports that brown is coming on strong as a new neutral, accented with reds, purples and olives. The DiVita collection of jackets as well as pieces from the Pamela McCoy line offer a variety of stylish options.

* Sweater dressing - Practical, comfortable and

more stylish than ever, knits are back in a big way this season. "A few basic knit pieces can get women through just about any occasion," says Keller. A knit pant, skirt and cardigan offer many wardrobe options and combinations. Pamela McCoy really shines here, with knitwear featuring retro couture lines combined with modern relevance. Add an embellished cardigan or sweater coat to your knit ensemble and you can go from the office to a dinner party with ease. Both the Pamela McCoy and Michael Simon lines include pieces that are set apart with trims like sequins and crystals.

* The perfect handbag Bags have become a fashion statement, not just a way to carry your wallet and cell phone. For fall, handbags come in all sizes, from oversized totes for daytime to small but stunning bracelet bags for evening. Look for bags with lots of texture, pops of color and trims like studs, grommets and even chains. Metallics and faux crocodile are still in vogue; other trends for fall include soft leather and woven leather. The Find, Sharon Goie and Charlie Lapson all bring fashion forward style to handbags this season at ShopNBC. ♦

See all the latest fall fashions and accessories at www.ShopNBC.com.

