

Trustpower's new HQ a paper-free workplace



David Porter

TRUSTPOWER has used the move into its purpose-built new head office in the Tauranga CBD to transition to an almost paper-free business environment.

The building includes both informal areas for staff needing to collaborate, as well as focus areas where they can work uninterrupted. But while each staff member has a personalised locker, no one at the new HQ has an individual office and the company has adopted what it calls "Synergy" ways of working.

Trustpower strategic initiatives manager Alice Thomson said the transition to digital emerged as part of its Synergy project.

"We recognised that in order to fully enable our staff to align with the activity-based working style, you needed to ensure they would be able to be mobile," she said.

But in the preparations for the move, Trustpower found the key reason staff felt they would be limited in embracing mobility was the amount of paper associated with business processes.

"The driver wasn't about going paperless, it was about appropriate and intelligent use of paper. It was about what and when you use paper and what you do with it afterwards, not just printing something because you can, then keeping dozens of different versions in files."

Ms Thomson said she had a team of 20 "paper chasers" who met every fortnight and monitored paper use across the company in the eight to nine months preceding the move.

"It's a cultural change. It takes time and people have to understand the benefit, both personally and from a work point of view."

Trustpower identified a handful of key business processes that were particularly paper heavy and then looked to some digitising of those solutions.

One of the key changes was to introduce electronic signature processes — in Trustpower's case using DocuSign software.

That enabled staff to digitally upload a document needing a signature, which could then be circulated electronically.

"I absolutely recommend electronic sign-offs," she said. "Previously I would have to print a document out, sign it, scan it and email it on."

The digital approach meant that could all be done electronically, stored and still be fully compliant.

"The other thing was we upgraded our scanning software so we could do more electronic workflow management, as opposed to having a piece of paper that comes in the door and is handed from person to person. Now that is opened and scanned at reception and a lot of that processing is done digitally."

Trustpower worked closely with its printer supplier Fuji Xerox on the transition to a digital environment and used Fuji Xerox's Next Gen MPS system.

The system can read a file whether it is scanned or received by email. It knows the format and looks for key pieces of information, which it can effectively read and translate back across the system.

"What we have done has been a real enabler to activity-based working," she said. "A key element of our approach in the new building is to be able to move from desk to desk. People don't walk around with paper anymore."

Ms Thomson encouraged other businesses of all sizes to look at more intelligent management of paper.

"There have been definite improvements to the speed of processing. If you can digitise the process, it makes everything much faster and more efficient and you are able to free up people to do more valuable activities."

Fuji Xerox NZ general manager of global services Cameron Mount said the

company was seeing a lot of digital disruption across businesses.

The initial stage for Trustpower was to consolidate its traditional print load and put some governance around that, he said. The second part was looking at where the volume of work was being performed and how digitisation could make the process more efficient.

Mr Mount said Trustpower had taken a broad overview of their processes, in which they took advantage of moving from a relatively spread-out infrastructure to a new building, to start fresh. "That was driven by their management team, and they gave Alice the power to drive that change."

And while the extent of embracing change was unique to Trustpower amongst Fuji Xerox's Bay of Plenty customers, it was very much a trend nationally.

"Our customers are all on that journey. You are dealing with so much more information coming into the

enterprise." The challenge was to manage that inflow as well as maintaining all the compliance aspects.

Although Fuji Xerox was perceived as a photocopying company, the company's work was moving from being transaction-based to becoming part of their customers' communications flow, he said.

"It's a shifting market. We're doing an

enormous amount of work that is outwardly facing, where we produce valuable personalised output as opposed to generic paper information. From a data perspective, our remit is to try and capture that data at source at the door before it enters the enterprise, then digitise it and move it around as efficiently as possible."

Going paperless

When Trustpower moved to its new headquarters, all of its "must keep" documents were stored in a large container. The company has now digitised and squeezed the entire container-load into one USB.

Other changes include:

- Sharing everything virtually. Workflows are primarily digital and they only use paper temporarily before recycling it.
- Employees have been shifted from admin to more beneficial areas of the business.



PAPERLESS WORKING: Alice Thomson says Trustpower's new digital approach required a cultural change by staff.

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