

WHITE PAPER

# Blending the Physical and Digital:

## How to Balance Your Data By Going Paperlite

**Widely associated with going paperless, many (wrongly) think that digital systems replace and eliminate hard copies and physical, paper-based storage. The reality is that to improve and sustain strategic and operational efficiency, companies implement a mix of digital and physical document storage.**



This means that rather than going paperless, businesses go paperlite to strike a practical balance in data management. Many misconceptions fuel paperless notions and confuse people about their approaches to digital and physical storage options. These myths maintain that physical paper storage is outdated (this is not true - it is needed and has improved with technology), insecure and time-consuming, among others.

Advances in technology (such as scanners) streamlined both digital and physical storage solutions. Thanks to these developments, we can accurately index, label, and securely store and destroy paper-based documents. This whitepaper examines how to balance your data through hybrid digital-physical solutions, and make informed decisions about your document management strategies.

# Physical data storage is still important

This whitepaper does not aim to dismiss the evident benefits of digitisation. Instead, it spotlights the modern-day prevalence of physical document storage and the merits of paper-based, and hybrid digital-paper, systems. Despite today's digital era, countless businesses still rely on paper documents and physical storage to meet targets in the quest for success.

## Businesses need physical data storage

Physical data storage benefits businesses in several ways. To deny these is counterproductive and unpractical. Security is one of the major advantages of physical document storage as digital data can be easily lost or compromised. Remote storage and safekeeping, such as that [offered by secure document storage experts](#), ensure confidentiality and limit the risks of losing important information.

Your paper documents streamline day-to-day operations. They make it possible to quickly reference something or retrace the history of activities. It is easier to comply with [document retention requirements](#) when storing physical copies as digitised systems are vulnerable to data breaches and losses. Also, you can monitor and implement access control more efficiently with a secure physical data storage point.

## Physical data still sits under GDPR legislation

Similar to digital data, physical information must also comply with the stipulations of data protection regulations such as the European Union's [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#). However, with the escalation of digitisation, many believe that these requirements only apply to digital documents. Principles such as accuracy, transparency and confidentiality apply just as much to physical information as to digital data.

# Giving physical data the respect it deserves

Today, we often discard physical data as outmoded with little to no value. This is simply not true. There are many misconceptions about digitisation versus physical data storage. Here are a few.

## There are no barriers to digital data storage

This is false. Even digital data is subject to national and international laws that prescribe physical recordkeeping. Apart from legal requirements, there are also cultural and financial boundaries that must be considered before eliminating paper documents.

It is often expensive to acquire and install the infrastructure needed for digitisation. Culturally, many people still prefer (and find it easier to use) paper documents. For

example, although the NHS scanned all files in a quest to go digital, it retains physical documents to comply with legislation. Likewise, despite the digital movement during the pandemic, many clients reverted to paper formats once the doors of businesses opened again.

## Physical data storage is outdated

Studies show that the NHS, for instance, has approximately 100 million hard-copy files, which are still stored traditionally. This is just one organisation. Think of the multitude of others that also use and store paperwork, showing that physical data storage is anything but obsolete.

However, it has evolved in tandem with emerging technologies. Today, closed-circuit monitoring, humidity controls and digitised labelling make it easy to trace, date and

manage documents. This makes physical data storage not only functional but also compliant.

## Going digital is simple and easy

There is a popular myth that digitisation is a simple exercise. A combination of a company's culture and client base, budget and operations all influence the reasons for and efficacy of going digital. It is a risky process with many pitfalls. For instance, resistance against digitisation and technical issues all hamstring this process.

Lacking a proper implementation strategy exposes a business to oversights and data losses. Similarly, poorly managed digital storage systems and a lack of digital skills open the doors to all sorts of risks, including security breaches.

# Going paperlite, not paperless

Paperlite and paperless are not synonymous. The latter refers to completely doing away with paper-based documents and storage. Paperlite, on the other hand, is not an either-or approach. It combines digital and physical data, allowing companies to maximise (and benefit from) the best of both solutions. This blend allows for optimisation.



## Legal requirements

Some documents legally require wet signatures, where people manually sign a hard copy. These include wills, bank accounts, and any official or legally binding paperwork, such as mortgages.

Other legally required hard-copy documents are birth, death and marriage certificates. These often carry official seals or watermarks, which cannot be verified in digital format. Although digital signatures are common these days, they are often not accepted as legally binding.



## It is becoming quicker to retrieve physical documents

Thanks to technology, retrieving physical documents is quick and easy. Specialist document management services offer scan-on-demand options, which means that you can access the required documents in a flash.

With Shredall SDS Group, you have a [specialist document management partner with multiple locations](#) across the UK. This means quick delivery of physical files without risking on-site storage security and safety issues.



### **Paper records are more trustworthy**

People typically view a hard copy (something that they can see and touch) as more valid and trustworthy than a digital file. Likewise, an original ink signature on a document promotes its trustworthiness. For these reasons, companies should prioritise the physical format and [storage of important documents](#) to maintain a bond of trust with employees and clients alike.



### **Digital transformation is expensive**

Digitisation is not cheap. Apart from infrastructure, such as servers, backup solutions and scanners, you must also plan and prioritise which documents will be digitised (and the hard copies destroyed). Also, your employees need training on how to digitise and how to securely access digital data.

Businesses have millions of documents to digitise and limited budgets to go digital. Going paperlite offers a practical solution to gradually digitise the necessary documents. Shredall SDS Group offers [records management consultancy services](#). We help you assess your document management needs and plan a strategy that aligns with the bespoke requirements of your business.



### **Files you keep but don't need**

Often, businesses have files on-site that are not needed for efficient day-to-day operations. However, it is important to keep these documents to ensure legal compliance with retention requirements.

Storing these documents in a remote, secure location is helpful as it frees up space, promotes streamlined document management, and complies with regulations such as the GDPR. At Shredall SDS Group, we offer off-site physical data storage that is secure and easy to access. Take a look at our [scanning](#), [indexing](#) and [document management software](#) to explore our professional and safe solutions.



# How Shredall SDS Group can help

Find out more

Implementing a combination digital-paper document management strategy puts you in a position to harness the best of both options. It allows you to plan and test different approaches without sacrificing efficiency and brand reputation.

## Top-level document security

Although digital data has many advantages, security and information compromise remain issues. Digital storage is vulnerable to cyber-attacks, which can endanger intellectual property (IP) and the confidentiality of personal customer information.

Businesses must keep scalability in mind as they expand. Your digital and physical document management strategies must address growth and continued security.

At Shredall SDS Group, we provide top-level security through our [document indexing services](#).

## Easy document access

Your hybrid document management strategy must allow quick and easy access to both digital and paper-based documents. An efficient document retrieval system is especially important if your physical data is stored remotely and makes an expert third-party partner all the more essential.

Backed by more than 28 years of experience, Shredall SDS Group is the top-choice professional partner for a paperlite strategy. [Contact us](#) today and find out how we can streamline your document management strategy.

