



# The 5 Paperless Myths

Why business owners are reluctant to shed their paper processes.

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Many business owners face a persistent dilemma these days. Clean, simple-to-use apps and web-based software solutions are everywhere. There are simple ways to stream videos, connect with relatives and friends from all over the world and do almost anything else using a smartphone, tablet or if you are really old fashioned an actual computer. Yet it seems the business owners' own processes still run largely on paper documents. Some have a tapestry of spreadsheets, word documents and other disparate solutions.

Processes like this often lead to data entry errors, loss of data and lack of valuable insights. Not to mention the countless hours spent to manage the administrative processes supporting this system. It seems there should be a way to make the business logistics much easier and more integrated, and there is. However, many business owners are reluctant to take the leap towards making their processes integrated, automated and paperless. This document aims to explore the common concerns and lay some myths to rest.

## It is only for big businesses with big budgets

One of the biggest reasons business owners site when talking about the decision to not go paperless is the lack of capital to develop a custom application that will do exactly what they need. They may have tried some off-the-shelf solutions and find that they all lack something. They are often left with the realization that they need something custom built for them. Custom built software immediately seems like a very large economical investment. And with technology progressing at an exponential rate it will probably be obsolete before its even completed.

What if I told you you could get a working, custom built, app for around \$2,000.00? It may not be the finished, polished product but it will be something you can start using immediately and build on to turn it into exactly what you need it to be. This is the positive side of the sometimes unsettling fact that technology is progressing exponentially. There are now software frameworks that, in the hands of a competent developer, can be leveraged to build robust, secure applications in a short period of time. This has dramatically lowered the cost for small to medium businesses to have their own custom built software solutions that take advantage of web and mobile technologies.

It is time for leaders of businesses of all sizes to change their thinking from wondering if a custom software solution is something they can afford to have to asking if its something they can afford not to have.



Mobile technologies are making it easy to access data in the field and also gather signature, photos and location data from mobile devices.

## We will have to get rid of all of our paper processes

Another common legacy misconception is that the software will immediately have to replace all of the paper to make it worthwhile.; One day the switch is turned on and that will end all of the paper forms, lists and documents. This is obviously a very daunting thought, especially for those who still don't feel completely comfortable with technology.

This common myth also needs to be laid to rest. The concept of a whole system-wide change is becoming a thing of the past. Today's agile software development frameworks make it much more effective to focus on one small part of your business. Preferably a part where you currently feel that your current administrative process is labour intensive. A good place to start is where you have someone copying data from paper forms into an electronic document. Chances are good a simple software solution could save time and maybe even yield data insights you may never have considered. If the paper forms are filled out by staff in the field a simple solution involving iPads or iPhones could be used to have immediate access to that data. Capturing signatures, pictures and location data is simpler and cheaper than ever before.

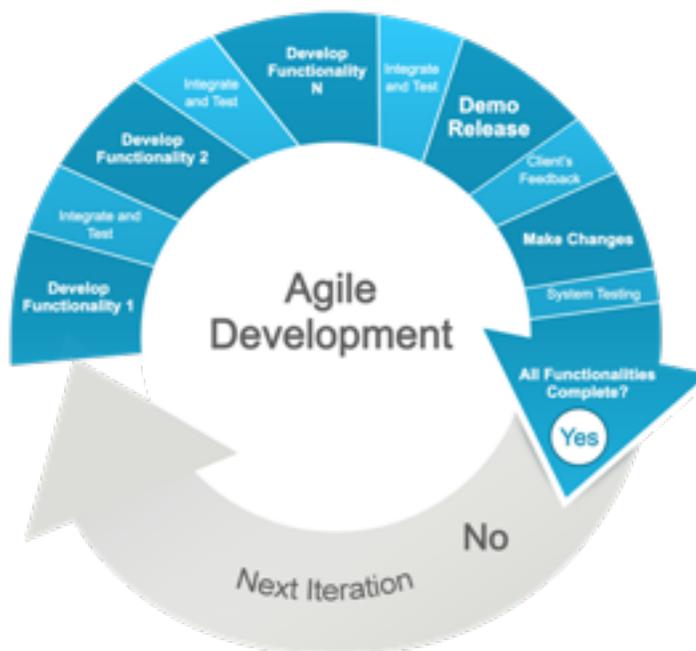
Automating processes that are currently done using paper forms is a great place to start automating with custom apps.



## We need to fine-tune our processes before we go paperless

Although this statement has some truth to it we should think about it a bit differently. It is true that automating a flawed process will only serve to make automatic flaws. However, as you focus on automating one small part of your business logic you can take the opportunity to re-think the process itself and work out the issues. Chances are that most of the inefficiencies ended up in your process from limitations of legacy systems or old reporting requirements that no longer exist. Building a new automatic system gives you the opportunity to work with your software developer to think about exactly which data points you need to gather, and how you need to access them. This often leads to a clean re-design.

So, don't worry about re-designing and fine-tuning your processes before switching to a paperless solution. The switch itself will be your golden opportunity to re-think and re-new.



Agile software development is a golden opportunity to refine business processes.

## We will require tons of training for our staff

Another barrier some business owners cite as one preventing them from making the leap to paperless processes is the thought of training all of the staff to use the new system. This concern is not without merit, training can be a very expensive and disruptive undertaking. There is good news here too. By focusing on a small part of your business you greatly limit the number of staff that need to be trained on the new system. It is also true that the training requirements for a well-designed software solution will be minimal. Make sure to use a software developer that understands good user interface design. Reducing training is directly linked to good user interface designs. How many people do you know who have had to undergo training to use Facebook, google or Instagram?

Good user interface design is key to reducing the need for employee training.



We need very specific criteria so we can design the paperless system perfectly. Changing things later will be expensive.



This is another myth left over from the era of large legacy enterprise systems.

Unfortunately many software vendors still operate like this, it is simply not the way it has to be any more. As mentioned in previous sections, today's agile software development frameworks allow for a much more informal approach. It is common for today's developers to build a quick working prototype and put it to use right away. As users

provide feedback and data comes in, the software is tweaked and polished until the prototype has turned into the working solution.

As processes are changed or data points are added software can easily be modified to accommodate the changes. This has opened the door for many businesses to take advantage of technology to speed up processes and provide real-time data insights.

## In Closing

If you have processes that you have a nagging feeling could be made more effective by using a tailored made app the time is right for beginning to explore your options. Try to put aside the myths that are holding you back and think of some of the processes in your business that could be automated. Speak to a software developer about using an agile development framework to build something small and simple at first and then iterate and build on it as money and time allows.

