☑ **Avoid memo mania**

When computers first entered the workplace, we were supposed to reap two huge benefits.

First, we were supposed to enter the "golden age of leisure." With computers making work so much easier and faster, we'd free up days, even weeks, of free time.

That didn't happen. We just upped our expectations of how much work we should do and how fast we should do it.

Computers were also supposed to usher in the paperless office. Everything would be on-screen, on disk, and online.

That didn't happen either. In fact, computers generate more paper, and your workers may be drowning in it.

Are you sure you need to put it in writing? And, if you do, are you sure your employees have to read it—or even touch it? And, will what you say help them improve?

Paper takes time—to handle, to read, and to dispose of. It also takes up space and creates clutter. If you can eliminate unnecessary paper, you've done your workers and yourself a big favor.

Don't misunderstand. Failing to put an agreement or a decision in writing because you don't want to be held responsible for it is dishonest and evasive. Many communications must be given permanent form for future reference.

But, you may be using memos to avoid personal contact with employees—with their messy questions and objections.

There's another potential danger with the written memo: once you write and circulate it, you may make the mistake of assuming all your employees received, read, and understood it. Unless the communication calls for a specific response, you have no way of knowing what happened to it on the receiving end.

Here are three ways you can eliminate unnecessary paper:

E-mail it: Electronic mail creates its own clutter and can be just as anonymous as paper. But it may be more appropriate and less cumbersome for many messages.

Post it: Most offices now have an electronic bulletin board, a cyber repository for reports. Let folks

know how they can access material if they need it, making it easy for them to avoid it if they don't.

Forget it: Best of all, if you really examine the message, you may discover it's redundant, irrelevant, or just plain ridiculous.

"Make sure the message is worth the ink, the paper, and your employees' precious time."