

Published in OFAS Newsletter April 2013

<http://www.ofas.org.uk/ofas-newsletter>

The march of technology

The first reports of the Paperless Office surfaced in about 1975. Despite the passing of almost forty years, judging by the appearance of most offices I see, including my own, there seems to be as much paper in evidence as was ever the case. However, the acceleration of technological developments has highlighted the cost and space savings as well as the efficiency of electronic storage systems, both physical and cloud based so it should be no surprise that the UK market size for storage products, both steel and wood, has been declining.

Office furniture manufacturers have been trying to stem this trend by producing more efficiently and passing the savings on to customers with lower priced products. As prices for office storage products have dropped year by year, one effect has been to discourage organisations from moving with the times.

Eventually however such trends can't go on forever and, when prices falling so low that they become uneconomic for the manufacturer, natural forces take over. When that point is reached, technology catches up and in this case, the natural evolution is to encourage offices to eschew paper and files and cabinets in favour of electronic folders and cloud –based storage.

The recent evidence for this can be seen in the statistics with quarterly sales of steel office storage products declining from £30m in 2008 to £15m in 2012. Now the manufacturers will need to push harder into export markets and be innovative in their design and development programmes if they are to successfully find new markets and sectors to exploit.

John Sacks

JSA Consultancy Services

www.jsacs.com

6 March 2013

©John Sacks 2013