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Kevin Lee Elder

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I have gone to the (Apple) dark side

Kevin Lee Elder

My friends and colleagues will tell you I have gone to the dark side. No, I'm not talking about my move into administration as the Interim Associate Dean for the College of IT. I am talking about my recent purchase and extensive use of my new Apple Macbook Pro, iPad and iPod touch.

I wish I had done this sooner. I now enjoy booting my computer up in seconds as opposed to minutes. All my devices are backed up and in sync every day. I have not had a virus, adware or spyware issue in more than three months.

The only new apps on my computer are the ones I purchased, and so far those have all come free. I am now trying to completely disassociate myself from Microsoft. When I said I wished I had done this sooner, I do know why I haven't. It is all caused by Microsoft's near monopoly on the business world.

I have worked in and taught in this business world since before the PC. I have seen Windows evolve from its horrible DOS beginnings. I have witnessed many an alternative operating system and productivity suite come and go. Like it or not, we have all, for the most part, survived with Microsoft. Oh sure, we all know a techie who has Unix or Linux on their PCs, but they are the minority and marginalized by the rest of us.

Apple has been around all these years, but it was considered a toy, for kids, or for the artistic. Apple has not been for real businessmen. After my last three fun and productive months I would have to declare those techy signs that Apple is making inroads into business. More than 7 million iPods have been sold since its launch in April. More than 65 percent of the Fortune 500 companies are deploying or piloting the iPad, Apple says.

"We haven't pushed it real hard in business, and it's being grabbed out of our hands," Apple's Steve Jobs said. "They [the companies] have stepped up, and we have just watched it happen.

I did not own an iPad. I never let it get out of my sight here on the dark side!

Kevin Lee Elder is Interim Associate Dean for the College of IT and an associate professor of information systems at Georgia Southern University. He may be reached by e-mail at kelder@georgia southern.edu

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According to Reuse.org, the average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of paper each year. When you multiply that staggering figure by the total number of employees at your business, it's easy to see the benefits of moving toward a paperless office.

The estimated number of office pages printed, copied and faxed annually in the U.S. actually peaked in 2007 at more than 1 trillion, according to InfoTrends, a Massachusetts-based market research and consulting firm.

Since that time, a growing number of businesses have been striving toward the paperless office model or at least making a serious effort to minimize paper whenever and wherever possible.

Going paperless has a number of benefits, from promoting environmental sustainability to minimizing clutter in your workspace. Here are a few easy steps you can take to move towards a more paperless way of doing business:

1. SWITCH TO PAPER-LESS BANKING. Most banks offer e-statements, rather than traditional paper statements. To get started, simply log into your online banking account and click on the option to go paperless.

2. SHRED OLD DOCUMENTS YOU NO LONGER NEED. The safest and smartest way to dispose of old files and documents is to shred them so private information — account numbers and credit card numbers — doesn't fall into the wrong hands. A portable office shredder can handle smaller jobs, while professional companies like Shred-Edx or SeaCoast Shredding can help with larger jobs.

3. CONSULT WITH YOUR EMPLOYEES ABOUT HOW TO BE MORE EFFICIENT. After all, they are the ones who know where the most paper is being wasted. Seek input from office staffers about areas where the use of paper can be reduced and put those ideas into motion. They'll feel appreciated and part of the process.

4. BACK UP YOUR ELECTRONIC FILES. As your company makes the transition to a less paper-intensive environment, it becomes increasingly important to back up your electronic files.

5. THINK BEFORE YOU SELECT THE PRINT OPTION. Do you really need to print that e-mail? Can you preview your documents on the screen? Every time you choose not to print a document, you take a small step in the right direction. Of course, if you can reduce the number of documents you print by 50 percent, that's a major accomplishment.

Jim LaHaise is the executive vice president and chief banking officer at The Coastal Bank. He can be reached at 912-201-4766 or jlahaise@thecoastalbank.com.