

¹ Proper Filing and Computerized System as a Tool for Successful ² Business Operations in Ghanaian Tertiary Institutions

³ Isaac Obeng Amoako¹

⁴ ¹ Methodist University College Ghana

⁵ *Received: 16 December 2015 Accepted: 2 January 2016 Published: 15 January 2016*

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⁷ **Abstract**

⁸ Information is the backbone of every business organization. It is, therefore, essential to a
⁹ company's health. However, it is easily taken for granted until its import is missing. Records
¹⁰ and information management (RIM) exists to prevent that from happening, but when filing
¹¹ systems are overdue for a time â???"up, critical data is most vulnerable. A poor filing system is
¹² a problem which might easily elude an organization unless internal operations have already
¹³ begun to unravel it. The consequences of missing records and duplicate data are severe
¹⁴ enough to impact business performance, and there are legal and financial implications as well
¹⁵ as security concerns. This paper attempts to describe a way to create a good system for
¹⁶ organizing, maintaining, and backing up files and folders on a personal computer.

¹⁷ Furthermore, the paper examines modern methodology through computer based applications.
¹⁸ While there are a number of ways to accomplish this task, the paper attempts to provide some
¹⁹ guidelines and directions for creating a system that works best for the type of information
²⁰ being organized. Additionally, this paper examines the definition of filing as well as the
²¹ important role filing plays in the day-to-day operations of an organization. Furthermore, by
²² conducting research into six Universities in Ghana, the paper assesses the impact of filing on
²³ Methodist University College Ghana and University of Ghana, in Greater Accra Region,
²⁴ Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ashanti Region, Catholic University
²⁵ College in Brong Ahafo Region, University of Mines in Western Region, and University of
²⁶ Education Winneba, in Central Region. It identifies some weakness or common mistakes with
²⁷ filing system used at the tertiary institutions mentioned above, the importance of filing in
²⁸ general, the consequences poor filing system would have on the corporate image of a tertiary
²⁹ institution. Subsequently, the paper aims at the discussions of the challenges of filing and

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³¹ *Index terms—*

³² **1 Introduction a) Statement of problem**

³³ Good Filing system in offices leads to the achievement of organizational and educational objectives. In some
³⁴ offices the filing and storage of data, whether in the form of paper letters, invoices or memos or as computerized
³⁵ electronic files, is regarded sometimes as a chore or necessary evil. And, not surprisingly, it is in just these
³⁶ same offices that tempers become frayed and staff frustrated and irritable when vital documents cannot be found
³⁷ before, say, a meeting which the Chief Executive Officer is attending! Indeed, a recent survey found that one in
³⁸ every ten (10) documents or files stored become immediately lost forever, thanks to inadequate and careless filing
³⁹ techniques and practices. Accomplished records management skills and techniques form a most important part of
⁴⁰ a secretary's repertoire today, particularly since developments in electronic office automation are transforming the

5 D) FACTORS THAT MAKE FILING ON IMPORTANT OFFICE ACTIVITY

41 speed at which data may be stored and accessed and extending massively the amount of data which organizations
42 wish to retain and refer to at intervals. The efficiency and effectiveness of every office work basically depend on the
43 systems of filing and indexing that have been put in place. This is particularly so where there is a large amount
44 of manual work. Even if automation (computerization) is adopted on a very large scale, filing and indexing are
45 equally important. A reliable filing and indexing systems supported by competent staff that is well-versed in
46 the art of filing and indexing are great assets to the Office Management and Administration. It is, therefore,
47 incumbent on every Office Manager in consonance with modern ways of filing to ensure that a good and efficient
48 system of filing and indexing is being adopted and used in the various offices.

49 2 (H)

50 Global Journal of Human Social Science -Year 2016 oor filing system in most offices has been one of the major
51 challenges over the years. It is in this regard that ??arrison (1986) observes that Administrators, Stakeholders of
52 firms, Organizations and Educational Institutions have been holding series of workshops, conferences and seminars
53 with the view to facilitating the process of filing system. Harrison John P (1986) observes that a delay in locating
54 a paper will interfere with and delay the other sections of the business. Sparling Allan (1970), further stipulate
55 that the misfiling of even one important letter may cause serious inconvenience to an executive, financial loss
56 to the business, and considerable embarrassment to the person who misfiled the letter. Evans Desmond (1986),
57 states that a recent survey found that one in every ten documents or files stored becomes immediately lost forever,
58 due to inadequate and filing techniques and practices.

59 3 b) Definition of filing

60 Filing is the term used to describe the process undertaken to arrange and classifying office documents in suitable
61 forms so that they can be retrieved with ease without any difficulty. It is in this regard that ??enyer (1994),
62 define filing as the process of arranging and storing records so that they can be located when. A file is, therefore,
63 a collection of letters, memoranda and other papers relating to the same matter usually kept in a particular
64 folder. This brings to fore the need to put in place a good filing system which will ease reference to documents.
65 Nonetheless, it is worth knowing the difference between a filing method and a filing system. Filing methods deal
66 with the way materials are stored or preserved in a file. That is, how the materials are arranged, classified and
67 numbered to ease reference.

68 On the other hand, a filing system is concerned with how the various files on the various subject matters are
69 managed. This covers the type of equipment used to store the files and the identification strategy used to locate
70 or retrieve a file from a cabinet or a cupboard George Terry (1984), on the other hand defines filing system as
71 the method of keeping papers in an accepted file according to pre-determine system so that they can be easily
72 as well as quickly found. Based on above definition, it is concluded that the process of arranging and storing the
73 records for the future reference is called filing. Records are the valuable assets of every organization including
74 Methodist University College Ghana. They therefore need to be preserved safely.

75 4 c) The Significance/Purpose of filing

76 The acts of keeping records are daily activities for every office. They, therefore, have their own importance and
77 categories:

78 Firstly, it makes the proper arrangement of such records by classifying and analyzing for the proper views
79 as per the requirement. The importance and purpose of filing is to keep the records and documents safely.
80 Collected records may have their use in the future. So, filing keeps the records safety from insects, fire, water,
81 theft, misplacement, dust, dampness etc. and makes available for the future use. Filing not only keeps the records
82 safely but also arranges them in a systematic way which facilitates on the availability of records in a minimum
83 effort.

84 Secondly, it is not for nothing that organizations spend time and money on training and equipment on filing
85 systems and methods. Indeed, organizations that attach great importance to filing systems and methods do
86 spend a lot of money to develop them because of the related benefits.

87 5 d) Factors that make filing on important office activity

88 Man has limited memory in the face of numerous files to be kept. It is thus incumbent that files are properly
89 kept neatly through computerization and with hard copy backups. For example the computerized system helps
90 to determine who has a particular file taken from a computerized cabinet or a cupboard. For the sake of saving
91 records from early destruction (protection of documents):

92 There are several cases of important office documents eaten up by insects, mice and other rodents not forgetting
93 hazards that fire also poses to such documents.

94 For locating file movement: Filing is important because it helps to determine who has a particular file taken
95 from a cabinet or a cupboard. This is through the use of an out-guide, out -marker or a tracer system.

96 Saving of valuable space: A good filing management because it helps to save more space. Sights of the desks
97 of office staff inundated with files are common in many offices. Sometimes, the files are so many that they eat
98 up a greater part of the desk top space needed for other things.

99 Keeping office and file neat and tidy: Filing is important because apart from keeping the files themselves
100 neat and tidy, it has the same implications for the office generally. This is because desk tops, floors and other
101 unsuitable places are cleared of files particularly, the dormant types. It is quite nauseating to pick files which are
102 very dusty when they are not properly managed.

103 Providing security for confidential documents: The important of filing is also evidenced by the security it
104 provides for confidential documents when file are kept under lock and key.

105 The importance of a good a filing system is to increase efficiency: Filing makes reality availability information
106 available without delay. It facilitates to run the business efficiently. Written evidences: Filing keeps the written
107 records safely which can be presented as evidence in the court to settle disputes because it provides factual
108 information.

109 Promoting goodwill: Filing keeps the past records of customers and helps to deal with them accordingly which
110 promote companies goodwill. Statutory requirements: Filings keep all the records safely which are useful to full
111 fill the statutory requirements. Provision of accurate and authentic records: Filing provides complete accurate
112 and authentic application of documents.

113 Achievement of goals: Filing a report allows the university the opportunity to meet the goals of creating a safe
114 environment that support the goals to be achieved. Increase in productive level: A functional office filing system
115 will not only help company officials to become more organized but it will also increase the productivity levels.

116 Production of tangible results: The right filing system produces important tangible results. Time saving:
117 Filing techniques can help the office staff save time and look much more efficient at work.

118 Enhancing future planning of the organization: By providing availability of previous records, it helps in the
119 future planning of the organization.

120 **6 II.**

121 **7 Literature review**

122 Sparling Allan E.

123 (1970) opined that the correspondence and records of a business are essential to its successful operation, and
124 every important paper must be filed so that it can be found at a moment's notice. He stipulates that a good
125 filing system is the best place to keep important papers, but it is also one of the worst places to lose them.
126 The misfiling of even one important letter may cause serious inconvenience to an executive, financial loss to the
127 business, and considerable embarrassment to the person who misfiled the letter. To ensure "perfect filing" of
128 papers, "perfect filing" is necessary.

129 According to John Harrison (1979), a large part of the efficiency of an office depends not only on the existence
130 of a reliable filing system, but also on the competence of staff in the art of methodical filing and indexing. Filing
131 is carried out for two primary reasons: i. To preserve correspondence and other documents, i.e. to keep them
132 tidy and clean. ii. To have the information contained in the papers available for quick and easy reference. He
133 stipulates that correspondence must be filed accurately so that it can be referred to quickly. A document filed
134 incorrectly can be the cause of a delay in a business transactions and even the cancellation of a valuable order.
135 Only when the filing system is efficient can the office function properly, as a delay in locating a paper will interfere
136 with and delay the order sections of the business. a) Technology; Computerized Filing Systems COMPUTER
137 systems can store vast amounts of data. But, as with records kept on paper, merely putting something into a
138 file cabinet is not enough. There must be some way to retrieve the information again when it is needed.

139 That is increasingly falling to special computer programmes called data base management systems.

140 Like any good file clerk, a data base management sets up the electronic data bank files with necessary
141 crossreferences, stores the data and retrieves it when requested.

142 In addition to increased speed of retrieval over paper storage, an electronic data base makes it easier to keep
143 information up to date. With paper storage, a company might have the same information in several places. A
144 customer's address might be on a master mailing list and on the billing department's list of overdue accounts. If
145 the customer moves, the address must be changed in several places. With electronic storage systems, a customer's
146 address can be stored once and shared by everyone. The data management system must see to it that people
147 retrieve only the data they are allowed to see.

148 Such systems, soled for several years by computer companies and independent software companies, are growing
149 in popularity. Robert N. Goldman, Senior Vice President of Cullinane Database Systems Inc., which sells data
150 management programmes to run on I.B.M. Computers remarked "When we started offering data base systems
151 in 1974 and 1975, we had to justify why customers wanted them". He said "Today people accept that they need
152 them." Once used only on the largest computers, such systems are also being sold to run on minicomputers and
153 even desk-top microcomputers.

154 Data base management are also expected to be a central feature of the automated office of the future. An
155 important use of the computer terminals that are landing on more and more desks is to allow office workers who
156 need data to get it directly from the computer rather than ask a programmer to write a programme to get it. A
157 marketing analyst for instance, might request sales totals for different cities. Some office automation companies
158 have recently announced recently announced systems with such capabilities.

159 One development that will help allow such retrieval of information is the so-called Relational Data Base

8 METHODOLOGY

160 Concept. Every company has grappled at some time with how best to organize its records. But in the case of
161 electronic record-keeping, the study of that problem has become a mathematical science and the subject of a
162 somewhat abstruse debate.

163 Most existing data base management systems organize data in a hierarchy resembling a family tree. A university
164 data base, for instance, might be broken down into schools, with each school further broken down into departments
165 and each department then broken down into faculty members.

166 The main drawback of most such systems, according to Jeffrey D. Ullman, a Professor of Computer Science
167 at Stanford University, and other experts, is that to get the information, the user must tell the computer on
168 what he wants, such as a list of the Faculty members in the Civil Engineering Department, but where in the tree
169 to go. That means he must be familiar with the tree.

170 The relational structure was conceived in 1970 by an I.B.M. Scientist, E. F. Codd. In relational system, the
171 data is stored in cross referenced tables. The university data base might have one table listing schools and their
172 departments and another table for faculty members, listing their departments and other characteristics.

173 With that kind of system, the user does not have to know how the data are stored. He can merely ask for the
174 information in a language resembling English and the computer will find the columns in the tables.

175 Because of that ease of use, many experts see relational data bases as the wave of the future.

176 One drawback, however, is that to gain such ease of use of the relational systems have rendered to be slower
177 than hierarchical ones.

178 The answer to that might be to build machines that would specialize in filing and retrieving. The machines
179 as would attach to the main computer.

180 Progress is being made in other areas as well. With all the data being stored in computer, there is a need
181 simply to catalogue what data are in storage. Such data about the data base are being stored in computers in
182 what are called "Data Dictionaries." Progress is also being made in letting computers in different locations split
183 the storage task but share files.

184 Robert M. Curtice, head of the Data Management Unit at Arthur D. Little Inc., a Cambridge, Mass, Consulting
185 firm, said "in data processing we have paid much more attention to the processing side than to the data side
186 until a few years ago". The new developments, he said, reflect the growing recognition that "the data has value
187 in itself." III.

188 8 Methodology

189 A population of eight-four (84) people from five regions of Ghana, that is, Central, Brong Ahafo, Greater Accra,
190 Western, and Ashanti across the southern sector within six Universities such as, Methodist University College and
191 University of Ghana, in Greater Accra, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ashanti Region,
192 Catholic University in Brong Ahafo Region, University of Mines in Western Region, University of Education in
193 Central Region, were interviewed to ascertain what has been the current state of filing system within their
194 administrative set up. Thus, fourteen people were selected from each University to answer the questionnaire
195 below. The constitutions of the fourteen people were made up of eight senior administrative officers and six
196 junior staff members from each of the six Universities. More senior members were selected because of their
197 in-depth experience in filing system. 1. Do you have any knowledge with regards to use of computing in filing
198 system? 2. What type of storage system is used for keeping copies of files at your office? 3. Is it difficult
199 retrieving hard copy files at your office? 4. Should personnel at the administrative setup periodically go for
200 refresher courses with regards to filing system?

201 The rationale behind question one was to ascertain how the administrative personnel have been either attending
202 seminars, refresher courses or have been abreast with modernity in filing system. Question one is followed by
203 two to be sure of how well selected officers were informed with regards modernity in filing system. The essence
204 of question three was to find out how well officers kept files at their various offices. Finally, question four was
205 asked to find out the readiness of administrative personnel to upgrade them with regard to filing system. Out of
206 the eighty-four people who were interviewed, fifty of them indicated that their knowledge in computing was not
207 much as compared to ten, who answered both questions one and two correctly, demonstrating a good knowledge
208 in computing. However, the remaining twenty-four administrative staff comprising of both senior and junior staff
209 members indicated that they had very limited knowledge in computing as regards filing system. With regards to
210 question three, sixty of the selected officers indicated that file retrieval was very easy. Twenty indicated that it
211 was a bit cumbersome and the remaining four indicated that it was very difficult with hard copy files but very
212 easy with computerized filing system. With regards to question four all the population of eighty-four gave a
213 positive response.

214 Analysis of the answers given by the population of eighty-four people from five regions across the southern
215 sector of Ghana interviewed reveals the following: 1. There is the need for more refresher courses in computing
216 pertaining to modernity in filing system. 2. Hard copies of files are well kept in all the six Universities thus
217 indicating that most administrative personnel have good knowledge pertaining to keeping of hard copy files.

218 a) The Consequences of Poor Filing System When documents are not properly filed, all the gains identified
219 under the importance of filing above will be negated. In addition to the negation, the following are also some
220 of the possible consequences if documents are not properly filed. 1. A poor filing system may lead to loss or
221 misplacement of records and documents. 2. It may also lead to a hold up of some of the activities to be carried

222 out in the office. 3. A poor filing system can lead to waste of precious time used to search for documents and
223 records. It is also an indication of office mismanagement and maladministration. 4. When there is poor filing in
224 an office, it can bring about malfunctioning of other departments, sections or units.

225 IV.

226 **9 Recommendations**

227 To ensure a good filing systems in the university college (MUCG), the following recommendations must be strictly
228 observed by secretaries and all those who are directly involved in handling office files.

229 A good filing system is a facilitator to quick references and retrieval of documents and records.

230 What constitutes a good filing system may be characterized by the following:

231 **10 ? Simplicity**

232 For ease of understanding and operation, a good filing system should be simple. A complex filing system will be
233 difficult to understand and operate.

234 **11 ? Accessibility**

235 This characteristic refers to the nearness of the files to the user. This implies that all the cabinets should be
236 strategically positioned so that they could be easily reached by potential users.

237 **12 ? Safety and Security**

238 The system being used should be capable of providing safety and security to the documents filed. This is necessary
239 for confidential materials.

240 ? Compact.

241 The system should have the characteristic of compactness. In other words, the system adapted should not
242 take up too much space in terms of equipment and floor.

243 **13 ? Suitability**

244 A good filing system should be relevant and suitable to the documents to be filed.

245 **14 ? Economy**

246 A good characteristic of a good filing system is that, it should not be too expensive to operate.

247 That is, the expenditure on the equipment and the operation should be reasonable on the equipment and the
248 operation should be reasonable and economical for the benefit of the University College.

249 **15 ? Cross -reference**

250 Crossreference refers to making room for documents or records to be located under different headings. A good
251 filing system should provide for the possibility of location documents or records under different headings.

252 ? Out-Guide /Out-Maker /Tracer System Out-Guide /Out-Maker /Tracer system is a system that gives an
253 indication of when and where a file has been taken to.

254 A good filing system should have this important characteristic so that a file that has been taken from its
255 original place could easily be located.

256 **16 ? Expansion possibilities**

257 The system of filing should make room for future expansion when the volume of operation increases.

258 **17 ? Classification system**

259 A very important characteristic of a good filing system is appropriate classification system. For example, the
260 classification may be based on Departments, Sections or Units. It may also be based on numbers or alphabets.

261 **18 ? Trained Personnel**

262 The efficiency of the system in operating will depend on the availability of trained personnel. The system should,
263 therefore, have well-trained personnel. There should also be in place, a policy which will enable secretaries and
264 personnel who handle files in the University College, to go through regular in-service training programmes.

265 **19 ? Maintenance Culture**

266 The policy of maintenance culture should be enforced to take care of filing equipment e.g. (Filing cabinets).

267 20 ? Precaution against office accident

268 To avoid accident in the offices, that following precautions should be observed: a. Secretaries should be taught
269 never to open more than one drawer of a filing cabinet at one time. b. Pulled out dreamers which obstruct
270 movement in the office should be pushed in immediately after use. c. Overloading of files, books and other
271 materials on top of filing cabinets should not be entertained.

272 ? Someone, preferably a responsible official, must authorize the filing of documents (by marking them in some
273 way, perhaps initialing) and indicate also how and where each should be filed and indexed.

274 The most likely person is the departmental head.

275 (This is often referred to as 'releasing'). ? Someone must be authorized to sort documents into file order. ? If
276 an index is used, the documents must be entered on the index as authorized above. ? Some arrangement must be
277 made for the removal of documents from, and their return to the files. Someone must be responsible for removal
278 and replacement and for keeping records of documents issued and to whom. ? It must be worked out how long
279 documents are kept in current files and at what regular intervals they are to be transferred to long-time storage.
280 This is referred to as 'weeding'.

281 ? At what regular intervals the documents in the longtime storage files are to be removed and destroyed.

282 V.

283 21 Conclusion

284 The importance of a good filing system at Methodist University College Ghana should not be under-rated since
285 it promotes efficiency and effectiveness of office activities and operations. The efficiency and effectiveness of
286 every office work basically depend on the systems of filing and indexing that have been put in place. This is
287 particularly so where there is a large amount of manual work. Even if automation (computerization) is adopted
288 on a very large scale, filing and indexing are equally important. A reliable filing and indexing systems supported
289 by competent staff that is well-versed in the art of filing and indexing are great asset to the Office Management
290 and Administration. It is, therefore, incumbent on every Office Manager in consonance with modern ways of filing
291 to ensure that a good and efficient system of filing and indexing is being adopted and used in the various offices.
292 Sparling Allan E. (1970) opined that correspondence and records of a business are essential to its successful
293 operation, and every important paper must be filed so that it can be found at a moment's notice. He stipulates
294 that a good filing system is the best place to keep important papers, but it is also one of the worse places to lose
295 them. The misfiling of even one important letter may cause serious inconvenience to an executive, financial loss
296 to the business, and considerable embarrassment to the person who misfiled the letter. A poor filing system may
297 lead to loss or misplacement of records and documents. It may also lead to a hold up of some of the activities to
298 be carried out in the office. A poor filing system can lead to waste of precious time used to search for documents
299 and records. It is also an indication of office mismanagement and maladministration. When there is poor filing
300 in an office, it can bring about malfunctioning of other departments, sections or units. A good filing system is,
301 therefore, a facilitator to quick references and retrieval of documents and records. To ensure "perfect filing" of
302 papers, "perfect filing" is necessary.

303 22 Preservation of Records and Documents:

304 Preservation of records and documents is a very vital activity which every office cherishes. In the absence of a good
305 filing system of preservation of records and documents, offices can hardly achieve their objectives. Occasionally,
306 it becomes necessary out of emergencies, to make references to certain documents and records such as payroll,
307 receipts, invoices and other statistical data. When these are not properly stored or preserved, they cannot be
308 referred to immediately and will create a lot of inconveniences and hamper office activities. The frustrating
309 experience of searching for a customer's or student's records for hours an end before a service can be rendered is
310 a nightmare that can easily destroy the corporate image of the University.

311 When records and documents are properly preserved, retrieval becomes easy. This promotes faster processing
312 of office information and other activities.

313 On the bases of the above, the University College or an Organization will be paying dearly for neglecting the
314 importance of good filing system in the areas of preservation and retrieval of documents and records.¹

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