Filing Equipment Comparisons

The first big decision when creating a filing system is determining what kind of filing equipment is best to house your records. Converting from a drawer-based filing system to an end tab system using shelf-based filing equipment can more than double the amount of records that will fit in a given space. But, filing in traditional vertical cabinets or lateral filing cabinets still makes sense in some offices. Here's what to consider if you are trying to decide what type of filing equipment you should use.

SPACE LIMITATIONS

The amount of office space you have available for active file storage will most likely determine if you can use traditional drawer filing cabinets or should switch to a shelf filing system. Vertical and lateral file cabinets both require committing aisle space for open drawers so users can access the contents of the cabinets. Open shelf file cabinets are completely accessible without requiring floor space for pulling out drawers.

When space is limited, shelf equipment delivers a very high ratio of files per square foot. Consider how many typical folders (about ¼ inch thick) will fit in a 6 foot by 24 foot filing area:

- Four Drawer Lateral File Cabinets – 8448 folders
- Seven Tier Open File Shelving – 15,232 folders (80% more)
- Compacting (movable) File Shelving – 34,272 folders (405% more)

CONVENIENCE AND SECURITY

Small amounts of records that need controlled access can be effectively managed in traditional drawer-based filing cabinets. If you do not have a lockable filing room or area, vertical or lateral drawer filing cabinets may be a good choice. Keyed locksets on each cabinet allow individual cabinets to be secured without locking an entire room. Small departmental or workgroup systems that fit into just a few filing cabinets may be more convenient for users if the cabinets are located near their workstations. Rotary file cabinets offer the convenience and security of traditional file cabinets with the added space-saving benefit of shelf filing.

EQUIPMENT COST

Shelf filing equipment is far less expensive than drawer filing cabinets. Elaborate mechanical hardware for drawers and locking systems raise the cost of storage equipment significantly. A recent comparison of retail prices for storing 10,000 files in lateral file cabinets vs. open shelving showed that the lateral files were more than three times the cost of the open shelf units.

The filing equipment you choose should provide the right balance of security, convenience for users, space optimization and capital investment to fit your business.