

From the Charlotte Business Journal:

<http://www.bizjournals.com/charlotte/print-edition/2011/08/19/expert-advice-on-your-questions.html>

Help Wanted

Expert advice on your questions

Premium content from Charlotte Business Journal

Date: Friday, August 19, 2011, 6:00am EDT

How can my small business save money on office supplies and equipment?

Mary Bruce, president, Kaleidoscope Business Options: Start by gaining control. Make one person responsible for all purchasing, and give that individual a spending budget. Comparison shop and take advantage of vendor discounts that come with your membership in trade and professional associations. Minimize your paper use by organizing your electronic files so they are readily accessible.

For low-tech equipment and furniture, consider used versus new. The cost per use for renting seldom-used equipment may be cheaper than ownership. Use cloud computing to minimize the need to invest in and maintain onsite infrastructure.

Mariellen Auer, owner, The Auer Agency: Look for cool stuff in the clearance bins. At the very least, use what you find for handwritten thank-you notes. Use vision boards constructed of cheap foam board and then use the other side for a different client.

Recycle copy paper by either running the sheets through the printer again for in-house use or cut them down for scrap paper. Patronize office-supply stores that offer free deliveries and that send weekly coupons.

Ike Heard Jr., Charlotte-based financial-management instructor, University of Illinois-Chicago: Lease more, and purchase less. Buy used equipment and furniture, especially for backroom operations. Make use of stores' discount programs and coupons. Join buying consortiums with other small businesses, and consider sharing equipment.

Go paperless as much as possible. Print in grayscale instead of color and, if your printer allows it, on both sides of paper. Take advantage of other companies' freebies, such as pens, notepads and stickies. Cut down on the use of business cards and brochures through QR codes.

To submit questions, e-mail David Harris at dharris@bizjournals.com.