



Two Isn't Better Than One:

Lowering Costs, Reducing Errors With
Forms Standardization

No one intentionally sets out to confuse personnel or waste account holders' time. Multiple forms designs with the same purpose usually happen by accident. Perhaps there has been a change of purchasing officers and one isn't aware of existing inventory on hand. Or, an institution requests vendor bids for each form separately. For instance, one vendor might have the lowest bid for cash tickets, but another vendor might have the low bid for general ledger documents. Over time, the institution ends up with a hodge-podge of forms from several vendors.

Financial institution mergers and acquisitions also play a role in forms redundancy. Typically, each institution will continue to use the forms on hand, until they're told otherwise. Cost-conscious branch personnel will hold on to forms inventory, thinking they may be of use in the future or in case of an emergency. But continuing to use two different forms to achieve the same task increases the potential for employee confusion, errors and inefficiency.



Eliminate Confusion AND Reduce Costs

Standardizing forms creates consistent design that becomes more readily identifiable to an institution's users than multiple forms. "A form can be converted by taking the composition (content printed on the form) and placing it in a standardized construction and size," said Tom Jones, senior manager of Client Solutions for Harland Clarke Financial Forms.

Construction refers to the size and type of paper that's used and the number of parts for a given form. Forms can have any number of parts, depending upon their use. Standardizing still offers many options for composition, but provides for less costly materials and often a faster turnaround when ordering. "Financial institutions more often are making the decision to move away from customized forms, which can be fairly expensive. They can realize a cost reduction from standardizing," said Jones.

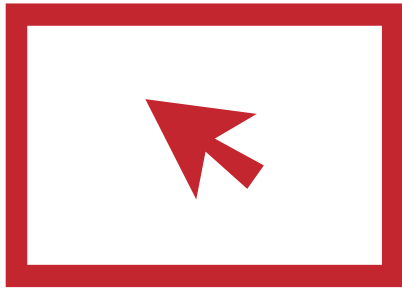
In most financial institutions, incorrect general ledger account numbers can be the source of countless hours of accounting reconciliation. But a standardized G/L ticket with a chart of account control could virtually eliminate the possibility of an incorrect account number being printed.

Standardization is especially important for MICR-encoded checks and forms. If an institution's MICR-encoding isn't readable, items are rejected. "Rejects can cost an institution anywhere from 75 cents to \$2 per item, so it adds up," said Jones.¹

Standardization improves efficiency. But there's an even greater benefit:
cost reduction.

¹ Harland Clarke Aggregate Client Data

Print On Demand Slashes Inventorying and Warehousing



Another way to reduce costs associated with forms printing is to lower the print quantity to order only what is needed and can be easily inventoried in the limited storage space of most financial institutions. Smaller print quantities are ideal for print on demand, which also saves time.

Reducing the number of forms is another important benefit of standardization. Print on demand virtually eliminates forms inventory and the need for warehousing, as well as streamlining forms management and eliminating obsolescence.

“With print on demand, suppliers store the composition templates and graphics electronically, and maintain the clients’ composition files for them. When clients are ready to order forms, they simply log on to the supplier’s website and access their composition templates, keying in whatever variable data they need to create merged documents that are then printed,” says Jones.

Print on demand not only gives the financial institution greater control over form content, but over quantity as well.

Print on demand
virtually **eliminates**
forms inventory
and the need for
warehousing.



Keep Forms Small for Big Impact

Industry best practice suggests keeping forms as small as possible as you move toward standardization. There are three fairly common sizes - 2 ¾" x 6", 3 ¼" x 7" or 3 ¼" x 8½".

Which forms easily lend themselves to standardization? A financial institution might begin with those normally used at a teller's station, as well as common back-office forms.

These might include:

- Cash Tickets
- General Ledger Tickets
- Notices
- Official Checks
- Lobby Forms
- Teller Receipts
- Control Documents
- Accounts Payable, Payroll and other checks

As financial institutions strive for greater efficiency and lower operational costs, forms standardization is a logical starting point. It accommodates the desire for smaller orders, reduces inventory and warehousing, and cuts production and other costs.



To learn more about how your financial institution can take advantage of forms standardization, call **1.800.552.2902**, email forms@HarlandClarke.com or visit harlandclarke.com/FinancialForms