



Introduction to Scanning

A platform for document and data capture

Understanding the business benefits around document scanning and strategies to adopt for your data capture requirements



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Paper documents still make up a large proportion of the information, contracts and reports that organisations have to deal with. In order to process, manage and control these paper documents, organisations need to look at ways of digitising and converting them into an electronic format so that they can be saved, found and shared more easily.

Recent events have shown that organisations may not always have access to their paper documents and if they are still reliant on paper then their business processes could be severely affected.

This whitepaper looks at the options that organisations have to implement data capture solutions, how they should approach the scanning of their paper documents and the strategies they can develop to help the flow of information around their organisation.

There are many factors to consider when implementing a scanning solution as requirements for scanning may exist in many areas within the organisation. This document will look at the key questions that need to be addressed when attempting to implement a scanning solution.

1

BUSINESS BENEFITS OF SCANNING

Identifies the main business benefits of implementing a document scanning process.

2

SCANNING – THE BASICS

Provides an overview of the basics of scanning and terminology.

3

SCANNING APPROACHES

An introduction to the types of scanning methods available to organisations, to suit different requirements of the business users, internal processes and physical infrastructure.

4

DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE STRATEGY

Looks at how the organisation is affected by implementing a scanning solution and highlights key areas to consider before implementing the system.

5

IN-HOUSE OR OUTSOURCE

Identifies the key considerations on whether to build an in-house solution or outsource.

Business Benefits of Scanning



There are many advantages for organisations that implement document capture and scanning solutions, including:

PROCESS EFFICIENCIES

Scanning removes most of the process inefficiencies that can be attributed to paper documents moving around an organisation. With scanning, a document can be traced instantly, transferred from one process stage to the next without the need for internal mail, can no longer be mislaid or damaged and is instantly available via search.

COMPLIANCE

Implementing a measured, auditable scanning process can assist with compliance demands that are imposed upon many organisations.

REDUCE STORAGE COSTS

A reduction in the physical filing requirements can be achieved for organisations that implement the correct processes, enabling it to shred paper documents once they have been scanned. An alternative would also be to send the documents to off-site storage as electronic copies are readily available.

AUTOMATE PROCESSES

Many processes within an organisation are document-centric and are quite often triggered by the receipt of a paper document into the mailroom. Attaching the document to a new or existing electronic workflow process will automate time-consuming and cumbersome manual processes.

BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Having access to your documents, contracts and critical information is key. With paper, this can be difficult as access is needed to where documents are stored and does not facilitate home-working.

DISASTER RECOVERY

Paper is at risk from many factors including theft, fire, flood and degeneration over time. Scanning these documents provides instant recovery should the paper documents be lost in the event of a disaster.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Process improvements will lead to better customer service and therefore increased customer satisfaction and help an organisation meet any SLA's they may have.

REDUCE INPUT COSTS

Many departments, such as Accounts Payable, often have large data input operations (e.g. inputting supplier invoice information) which could benefit greatly from automating the recognition and input of the data, reducing the overhead of having to input all of this data manually.

Scanning – The Basics

Scanning is the process of taking your paper documents and digitising them into an electronic format. There are a few terms that are commonly used when referring to scanning and these are outlined below.

DOCUMENT SCANNING

Refers to the process of scanning documents, into an electronic format such as a PDF file.

SCANNED IMAGE

Scanning a document is just like taking a photograph of the paper copy. It looks exactly the same and can be used in place of the paper original as part of your business processes

DATA CAPTURE

The process of automatically capturing data from a paper document after scanning. An example of this is an invoice where all of the details of the company who sent it, items ordered, and the invoice value can be captured without the need for manual input.

FORM SCANNING

The process of capturing all of the data from a form, for example an application form could have all of the data read automatically during the scanning process with the data being passed to another IT application.

BACK SCANNING

Refers to the scanning of historical documents, for example when an organisation decides to scan its client files it may want to scan all of the historical ones as well as the ones currently in use.

CLASSIFICATION

Software being able to intelligently understand the type or purpose of a document so that it can be automatically stored in the correct location or sent to the correct person or department; for example; an invoice, complaint letter or contract.



Scanning Approaches

A typical organisation may find it a challenge to identify all of the possible areas where scanning may currently, or may need to occur. The following illustration introduces a high-level view of each of the scanning methods available to organisations, to suit different requirements of the business users, internal processes and physical infrastructure.

An enterprise scanning solution may incorporate a number, if not all, of these areas. It needs to be implemented in such a way that it does not add excessive overheads to the business in terms of resource and time and encourages different areas of the business to standardise their approach and identify common requirements.

Departmental

- Point solutions to address specific needs
- Can be part of your overall corporate-wide strategy
- Geographical departments or offices
- Complex or differing requirements

Network

- Maximise investment in multifunction devices
- Scan at devices then route through to processing
- More suited to ad-hoc scanning
- Scan with mobile devices (smartphone / tablet)

Post Room

- Deals with all incoming correspondence
- Post scanned in mailroom then electronically passed to addressee
- Documents can be classified by post room or sent to departments for further filtering

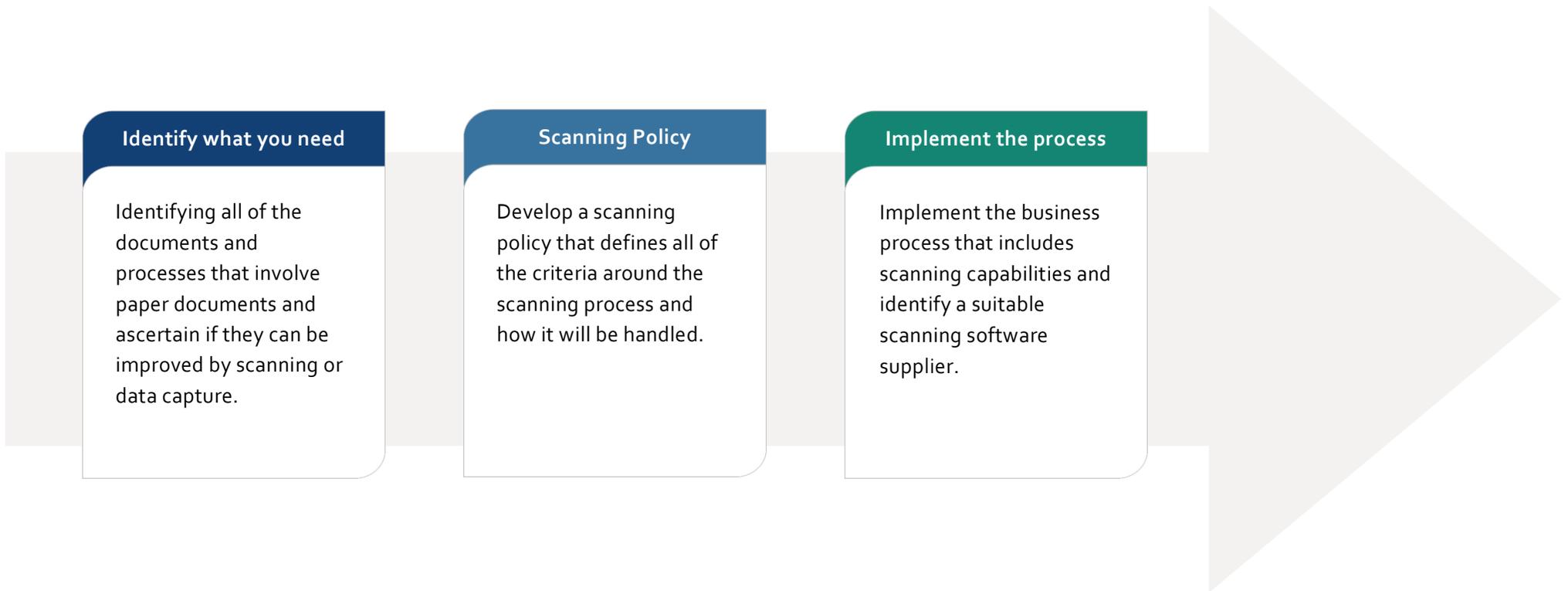
Centralised

- Documents scanned in one location then passed to other different locations
- Remote scanning using mobile devices
- Alternatively use an external bureau (outsourcing) to handle scanning

Developing an Effective Scanning Strategy

Whichever methods of scanning an organisation may choose or in most cases a combination, it is important to make scanning and capture of documents and information a key component for each business process. In lots of cases it is the cornerstone on which to build digitised business processes that will help transform your business and enable business benefits described earlier in this document.

As part of developing a strategy, a three-step approach to implementation should be considered:



Developing an Effective Scanning Strategy



Identify what you need

The first decision needs to be made on the documents that need to be scanned. The easiest way of identifying these is to identify all of your business processes and the documents that are inputted or created from them, and then consider whether each document could be scanned.

Questions to consider include:

- Do you have to refer to paper documents?
- Do paper documents get passed around as part of the business process?
- Do you manually type information contained in documents into another computer application?
- Do you often have to search for these paper documents?
- Do you ever need to access these documents remotely or share them with others?
- If you didn't have access to any of these documents would that affect your ability to perform your job?

If the answers to any of these questions is yes, then these should be considered as potential contenders to scan. There is an argument that all paper documents should be scanned in order to protect the organisation against all eventualities.

The next stage is to look at the volumes of each of the documents: the higher the volume the greater the case for scanning, but in many cases benefits can be sought from lower volumes, especially where data capture is required or the documents need to be referred to.

It is also worth considering the journey that documents go on, for example if a paper document is passed around the organisation, how long does it take and if it was electronic could it speed up the process?

Often organisations start with some specific business processes or departments, then implement a solution and address others later. The key to any solution is identifying areas that are business critical, where most savings could potentially be made and risk exposure reduced.

Scanning Policy

It is recommended that a scanning policy is produced which describes the corporate requirements for paper document scanning. The scanning policy should be a living document that is added to and amended as requirements change.

This will define such things as:

- Identify the business processes that will be enhanced by implementing a scanning solution
- What paper documents will be scanned
- What information and data is to be captured from the scanned documents
- Which scanning approach will be implemented: departmental, network, post room or centralised

For each of the processes and documents you should also consider the following:

- How new incoming paper-based content will be managed
- How existing paper-based content will be managed
- The future use of paper-based files as a repository for information
- Service levels from receipt of post to its availability in digital format
- How junk mail will be handled
- How to handle paper that will not be scanned
- Approach to unusual paper formats and difficult to scan items

Often organisations start small and then grow out their scanning capability so it may be better to start with one or two processes and get these right before adding in new processes and document types.

Scanning Policy, *continued...*

LEGAL ADMISSIBILITY

The subject of legal admissibility is not covered by this white paper but it is something that needs to be covered as part of an overall scanning strategy. No technical solution alone can deliver legal admissibility as it needs to also include controlled business processes, policies and procedures across the board to ensure compliance.

COMPLIANCE (GDPR)

Legislation such as GDPR is driving how organisations deal and manage their documents and data. Whether paper or electronic, having searchable electronic versions makes it far easier to find and destroy and help compliance.

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Many organisations have requirements concerning storing records in line with industry standards and practices. Scanning documents and records is the starting point of an electronic records management system.

DISASTER RECOVERY

If paper is destroyed, then any information contained on it is also lost. All organisations need to consider how they would deal with a disaster such as fire or flood, but also how they cater for periods where access to their offices may be restricted.

FORMS OPTIMISATION

The organisation should consider optimising existing forms to maximise the opportunity for data capture. Where possible, any forms which are generated by the organisation should be redesigned with recognition in mind. Those areas which will be completed by hand should include constrained areas to improve the system's ability to recognise handwritten text. Applying barcodes to identify documents can often assist in the classification and indexing process when those documents are eventually completed and returned.

Developing an Effective Scanning Strategy

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Depending upon the approach taken, thought needs to be given to the scanning process and ensuring that resources are allocated, made available and trained in their new roles and responsibilities. The larger the system, the more likely that the roles allocated to scanning related tasks are to be full time. The types of roles that may be required are:

- **DOCUMENT PREPARATION** – for opening the mail / documents, sorting into batches, removing staples and getting ready to scan.
- **SCANNING** – feeding the documents into the scanner and carrying out checks on scanned image quality.
- **INDEXING** – applying metadata to the documents such as invoice number, client ID, case reference etc. This overhead can be partly automated with the introduction of recognition technologies.
- **QA/QC** – Quality Assurance and Quality Control stages can be applied in order to ensure that document images and metadata are correct and consistent. The effort required to fulfil this role often reduces over time as the business gains confidence in the system.

In a small implementation, all of the above roles may be fulfilled by one person, however a larger deployment could see multiple individuals fulfilling each role. It is important to understand volumes when defining the system so that the effort can be more accurately estimated

USER EXPERIENCE

The end to end user experience needs to be considered, especially when implementing scanning solutions that will be deployed to knowledge workers. It is important that the process for scanning ad-hoc documentation is as streamlined as possible and does not introduce significant overheads to the user community. Any interface needs to be intuitive, quick to learn and easy to implement



Implement the Process

Once the Scanning Policy has been defined you should be in a position of knowing what you are going to scan, how you will scan it and how it will fit into the business process. The next stage is to choose the technology, implement it and then train up your team on using it. Some considerations for this stage are:

SOURCING A SCANNING PRODUCT

There are many industry leading scanning products on the market which provide very rich feature sets. As part of a managed process, an organisation needs to clearly define its requirements and assess a range of products in order to obtain the best product match. There may be varying requirements across the organisation and the final solution may indeed be a combination of products.

Where possible it is best to minimise the number of products and some of the applications available on the market do provide solutions for mailroom, departmental, process specific and remote scanning on a single platform. These products should be considered first when purchasing an enterprise platform as it minimises the installation effort and reduces the overall total cost of ownership of the solution.

IN-HOUSE OR OUTSOURCE

The consideration of whether to undertake scanning internally or outsource it will be discussed in more detail in the next section. It's worth noting that your scanning policy could include a mixture of the two for different processes and document types.

CONTINUOUS REVIEW

It's important that once a solution is implemented and running that you continually review the process to ensure that processing is efficient and you are getting the best results from your scanning and data capture



There are many factors which may determine whether or not an organisation chooses to outsource the scanning activity. The key questions that should be considered are as follows:

CAPABILITY

Does your organisation have the capability to operate and manage a scanning solution? Often departments and internal IT resources are stretched, so implementing a solution may take longer than required.

TIME

How quickly do you need to get setup and start scanning documents? Outsourcers already have solutions implemented and so can start processing documents quickly for you. Typical in-house solutions can take 3 days for a simple scanner set-up through to weeks, or even months for more complicated data capture requirements.

VOLUMES & FREQUENCY

What are the volumes you are likely to be receiving and the likely demand for scanning across the organisation? Considering the volumes and demand is critical. For smaller volumes, in-house solutions often make more sense. Outsourcers can quickly scale up to help provide cover for cyclical work or where there is a spike in volumes.

COSTS

Do you want the more upfront costs of implementing an in-house solution or a 'pay as you use' service that outsourcers can provide?

SECURITY OF DOCUMENTS

What is being scanned and the security around it needs to be considered. Outsourcers can provide confidential and secure environments in which to scan and store documents, but some information may need to stay in-house.

PROCESS

Ensure that any scanning solution put in place will enhance your business process and the scanned documents and associated data can be easily integrated into your IT systems

There are many companies that provide a bureau scanning and indexing service with images and metadata being returned to the client via a form of electronic transfer. Some bureaus also offer an image archiving facility whereby they manage the document images and provide the client with an interface to search for and view the images remotely. The key for outsourcing is finding someone who will work in partnership with you, to become part of your business process and be able to scale up and down based on your requirements

About ImageFast



ImageFast is an award-winning technology consulting and services company, delivering business solutions to clients in insurance, financial services, energy and the public sectors.

With over 20 years' experience we implement scalable technology solutions for organisations that have challenges managing large volumes of complex documents, data and information to help streamline business processes, save money, reduce risk and increase their competitive advantage.

We achieve our successful results by applying our deep-rooted product knowledge, strong programme management disciplines, standards-based methodologies and collaborative approach to all our projects.

ImageFast's expertise in document capture ranges from assessing business processes for potential application of scanning technologies through to implementing suitable tools for scanning requirements. In the later phases of a rollout throughout your organisation, ImageFast can support you through the critical change management and adoption phases to ensure that the best business value and return on investment can be achieved.

Learn more about how ImageFast can help you with your scanning requirements and book a free data capture assessment:

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