

Ace Your Scanner Deployment

Strategies to Get the Most From Your Scanner Investment

The business case for advanced document scanners is proven and compelling.

Proper deployment can reap the benefits of:

- Cost savings
- Improved staff productivity
- Faster delivery of mission-critical information downstream
- Enhanced customer experience
- More accurate information
- Streamlined compliance



While making the right scanner choice is fundamental to achieving these benefits, you also must take the right approach for deploying your document scanning solution.

8 Deployments Strategies: To ensure you achieve the full benefits of your scanner

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Buy enough scanner capacity.

Many organizations use their average document processing volumes when determining scanning capacity. But you also must consider variables such as:

- peak daily volume,
- required or contracted deadlines for completing work,
- and the effective throughput (not the advertised speed) of the document scanners you are considering purchasing.

Case in point, one firm that had originally modeled its scanning capacity based on its average volume, discovered that nine additional scanners would be required to handle the peak daily volumes it received for just two days of the week. They had only 15 scanners in their solution design. To cover the two high-volume days, they would need to add a second shift to complete the work - obliterating its business case.

Involve key stakeholders in the requirements definition.

In some businesses, the IT department will unilaterally choose their document scanners potentially saddling operations with scanners that don't meet their requirements or are difficult to use. In other businesses, an operations team will select scanners without input from their IT department only to discover, the organization's legacy system or infrastructure can't support the scanner.

This is a common mistake for business process outsourcing (BPO) providers where IT departments try to standardize on one type of scanner. Because these decisions are typically made based on experience with a scanner, the BPOs end up with a fleet of inefficient lower-volume scanners.

A more effective approach is for you and your stakeholders to meet early-on during the scanning solution selection process to determine critical business requirements and identify any potential infrastructure considerations (such as additional IT support, larger network pipe or more PCs).

Conduct a proof-of-concept (POC).

Never purchase a scanner without first seeing how it processes your documents. Many organizations buy document scanning technology based on what they read in a brochure or see at a trade show. You need to test whether the scanner fits your business requirements and processing environment.

Have some of your operators test the scanner's usability. One company was enamored with the idea of prepping and scanning documents in the same step, believing that this approach would reduce its number of full-time equivalents (FTEs). However, a POC showed them that they would have to add staff and more scanners if they deployed this type of system. By conducting a POC, they avoided this misstep without incurring out-of-pocket expenses.

A POC is also a chance to test a scanner's image quality; staff can inspect images generated by the scanner or run them through their downstream applications.

Organizations typically are welcome to bring work to a vendor's office for a POC. In some cases, a vendor may be willing to deliver a scanner for testing at your own site. Check with your vendor to see what your options are.

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Think end-to-end.

4 Your front-end scanning and capture solution must work in concert with your back-end workflow technology. Ensure that the scanner can output images and data in the format required for back-end systems, whether it's flat files, XML files, Excel spreadsheets or database output.

One BPO purchased a scan-and-capture solution that could only output images and data in one format, requiring the BPO to spend a lot of time and money reconfiguring the output for customers.

Ask vendors how their solution integrate with back-end systems, and whether their architecture is "open" or proprietary. An open architecture will typically output data and images in any format that the end-user requires, eliminating the possibility that you will have to reformat the information.

Also ensure that your back-end systems are fast enough to keep up with their front-end solutions otherwise, they will experience bottlenecks in the "hand off" of images and data. Some users have experienced delays as much as 35 - 40% between front-end and back-end systems.

Coordinate software & hardware vendors during system deployment.

5 No one wins when there is a lack of coordination between software and hardware vendors.

A lack of coordination may cause wasted effort, finger pointing and delayed implementations. In some cases, front-end and back-end vendors may get their systems up and running but there is no integration because the vendors and the customer never discussed the critical issues such as:

- what data needs to be passed from one system to another
- image formats required for back-end systems
- how data should be routed

Ensure a tight integration between systems, and a smooth implementation, by bringing together all your vendors and internal stakeholders early in the process to coordinate the system deployment. And don't allow individual departments, such as IT, to manage parts of the implementation, or you may also have miscommunication and missed hand-offs.

Use a phased approach.

6 In their drive for fast results, many organizations bite off more than they can chew when implementing a scanning solution. Trying to deploy an entire system at once can overwhelm internal resources, and draw out the deployment, putting the entire project at risk of going off track.

Determine where you can have the biggest impact on your operations with the least amount of change. Don't break a process that isn't broken. With an initial success under your belt, prioritize the next phases of implementation based on their potential operational and strategic benefits.

Manage change.

Many organizations are closed-minded when it comes to re-engineering their processes, falling back on the way they've done things for the past five or 10 years.

Some organizations manually count every document that they scan and write a number on the first page of each batch. This process was necessitated by older technology that was prone to double-feeds or that didn't have automatic document counters. There is no need to do this with intelligent document scanners. Continuing to do so creates needless, not to mention costly, work.

The best strategy for helping your staff overcome their fear of change is to let them see the technology run firsthand. Once they see that the scanner detects double-feeds and counts documents, as examples, they will recognize the impact it will have on document preparation and other steps.

Cut the paper cord.

Many organizations use unique transaction separator sheets for each type of work that they process, creating an enormous breath and volume of paper.

Intelligent document scanners enable you to rid yourself of this paper, automatically separating transactions based on documents (e.g. checks or envelopes) within a batch. The technology also allows you to insert generic separator sheets that can be re-used. One company who utilized this strategy has re-used its generic separator sheets for the past five years, saving significant money.

Following these 8 strategies will help ensure you get the most from your scanner investments.

Partner with the industry leader.

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