

8 Hot Trends in Document Imaging, Scanning and Capture



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Microsoft SharePoint has brought new life to imaging and capture space. The influx of creative and innovative partners (solutions builders), has forced innovation and creativity in scanning and capture, with a key focus on workflow and features that bring real solutions to real business problems. Canvassing our partner/customer base has provided a key listing of hot trends and features (not necessarily new ones) being utilized in scanning and imaging implementations:

1 -- Advanced Data Extraction (ADE) – Not Grandpa’s Zone OCR.

Automation is the key, and the ability to automatically extract metadata from documents provides a solution that can really show concrete value. The affordability of these solutions is at a point where any size business can afford an implementation, and a reduction in staff and time requirements to process key business documents can provide maximum efficiency. This can range from the Law Firm that needs to extract case numbers from correspondence, to the AP Department looking to extract invoice header info.

2 -- MFPs as Onramps – Copiers are more for than just copies.

MFPs have come a long way over the past 5 years, and the latest generation are great multipurpose network scanners. Copiers, Faxes, Digital Senders all provide great onramp possibilities for any back end system, and allow organizations to leverage their investment in these devices. With SharePoint, a true collaboration platform, putting scanning and capture in the hands of every employee becomes a necessity.

3 -- Fax Processing – Faxing is dead, right?

How long have we been hearing that fax is dead? There are many reasons fax is still pervasive:

- Every business (small, medium and large) has a fax machine, while not every business has the ability to scan documents.
- As a core technology, fax is still the simplest point-to-point technology that is viewed as “secure,” especially in certain verticals like financial services and medical.

It is safe to say faxing will be around for quite a while, and companies need a better way to deal with processing inbound faxes. Just having a fax server is not enough, and organizations are looking for ways to intelligently process faxes, and route them into workflows and repositories.

4 -- 2D Bar-coding – What is that strange looking blob of dots?

Tying in with the overall theme of automation, and the reduction of interactive processing, 2D barcodes are the perfect technology to incorporate preset data into organization documents. Take for example the HR intake documents that need to be signed and filed digitally. Encoded in the 2D barcode is the employee ID, the type of document, and any other required data that needs to be collected upon scanning.

5 -- Document Harvesting – How do I get these 10,000 PDFs into SharePoint?

Let’s face it: just about every company has an existing set of scanned documents on the network that were scanned by a copier, MFP or scanner. Once they make the leap to an ECM/DM system, the challenge becomes the migration of these documents and their metadata into the new repository. Document harvesting provides the ability to automatically grind through a network folder structure, gathering folder info, file naming schemes and document data, with the goal of moving the image, perhaps providing OCR output and populating index fields/columns.

6 -- Redaction – Is my Social Security Number safe?

Ah, confidentiality. Most of us shudder at the thought of how many times our confidential information has been exposed on physical and digital documents. More and more organizations are looking at ways to protect confidential information through automated redaction. Having applications that can parse document text and obscure matching patterns of SSNs, Tax ID’s, etc. has become an absolute requirement in today’s world.

7 -- Metadata Output – Data about the data about the aforementioned data.

Efficiency can be gleaned by gathering information once, and then sending it to any location you may want. If I am collecting invoice information during my indexing steps, why not send the data to my ECM, financial and reporting repositories all in one fell swoop? Documents in today’s environment contain crucial information for business operations, and the collection of document data can be time intensive. More and more organizations are looking at ways to reuse and share collected data, and utilizing advanced capture as an all in one collection vehicle can reduce labor and provide information quickly to consumers of the data.

8 -- SharePoint – SharePoint, SharePoint, SharePoint, and then again, SharePoint.

Take SharePoint, add an onramp, and you have an instant image repository. Oh I know, I know, I have heard it a million times: “SharePoint is not a true DM system”, “SharePoint lacks search capabilities”, “SharePoint requires 10 admin staff per single end user”. Ok, I exaggerated on the last one a bit, but I find it truly amazing the overall lack of knowledge and misinformation within the traditional ECM space on the SP platform. At this point, it is purely an exercise in market education as businesses are quickly realizing they have a true document imaging platform for free (or a small relative cost) at their finger tips. Definitely an Imaging 2.0 game changer.