

What exactly is document imaging? How does it work?

Document imaging is the process of converting paper documents into a digital format. Original paper documents are fed through a scanner where the images are electronically captured. These images are converted to a digitized form. This allows them to be stored and retrieved by a computer. A variety of software programs are available to manage these document images.

Document imaging has many benefits:

- ▶ Replaces paper and microfilm archives.
- ▶ Utilizes compact disc storage and retrieval technology to allow instant access to your documents.
- ▶ Eliminates the frustration of misfiled/lost documents.
- ▶ Eliminates the expense of refilling previously retrieved documents.
- ▶ Significant cost savings not having to pay for off-site storage, additional office floor space/personnel to maintain file cabinets.
- ▶ Maintains file integrity. You can add subsequent information into already existing files and records.
- ▶ Provides improved operational efficiency.
- ▶ Offers enhanced customer service being able to retrieve an invoice and fax it to a customer instantly.
- ▶ Allows shared access of documents.
Reduces paper volume by eliminating the need to keep multiple copies of your paper files.

Most document images are captured using a scanner of some type, although many companies capture incoming document images directly from their fax lines. Scanners are available all the way from one-page-at-a-time manual scanners to hi-speed rotary scanners that can handle hundreds of documents per hour.

Document imaging gains its value by REDUCING physical storage space, REDUCING document retrieval time, and INCREASING the speed of document workflow through an organization.


REDUCTION OF STORAGE SPACE:

A document that has been converted to a compressed digital image at 200 x 200 dpi takes about 50K of storage space. At that rate, **a typical 1.2-gigabyte hard drive can store over 20,000 documents, as much as two filing cabinets.** While hard drive storage is fine for recent documents, when it comes time to archive those documents, optical imaging such as laser disks offer an excellent way to store tens of thousands of documents while keeping them relatively easy to access. A typical 5 1/4-inch laser disk can hold nearly two filing cabinets worth of documents, while some 12-inch disks will hold up to eight or nine filing cabinets.

Optical jukeboxes allow remote users the ability to call up a particular document, and can hold anywhere from five to 200 disks, allowing the equivalent of 10 to 400 filing cabinets of storage in little more than the space required for one filing cabinet.

Once a document image has been captured, it is typically indexed using one or more identifiers. This allows one or more users to retrieve a document quickly, cutting down the time it would normally take for a document to reach them via manual workflow.

Electronic document storage systems also allow users to transmit copies of retrieved documents to customers with the push of a button. This reduces the time spent on customer inquiries from hours to minutes.

Other advantages to document imaging include the ability to combine images from different sources to build electronic files, and the ability to allow access to authorized users only. In addition, once a document has entered the system, it rarely becomes lost, as the original image is always available on the disk. 



There are many advantages to document imaging.