

St. Paul Guarantee takes a big processing step with a small footprint

SITUATION

A major Canadian underwriter shares an electronic document repository among brokers, analysts, and underwriters across the North American continent.

OBJECTIVE

Implement an easy, user-friendly scanning solution to put searchable copies of payment documents online, as soon as possible.

SOLUTION

Installation of a **Kodak** Scan Station 100 in the accounting department at the headquarters office.

COMMENT

"I knew instantly that this was the perfect solution for us. I bought the Scan Station 100, sight unseen, and haven't regretted my decision."

~ Tim Van Dusen,
Network Administrator,
St. Paul Guarantee

Connecting people with content was the goal of the IT department at St. Paul Guarantee for their distributed file system. They'd laid the foundations for a shared document repository to support client folder applications across offices in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. Then Tim Van Dusen saw an opportunity to improve access to mission-critical payments data.

Enabling a document-intensive business with imaging

St. Paul Guarantee is a leading Canadian provider of surety bonds and other specialty insurance products. These financial products are used to guarantee big construction projects, such as buildings and highways. The company is a subsidiary of St. Paul Travelers, which itself comes in at number 85 on the Fortune 500 list. In a typical year, St. Paul Guarantee issues almost ten thousand bonds accounting for some \$150 million in gross written premiums.

According to Van Dusen, "Our underwriting and claims processes are document-intensive, with dossiers that can grow to 2,000 or more pages when underwriting analyses are included. The days when mail, courier delivery, and fax could keep up with the pace of business are long past."

The company's migration to digital imaging in 2004 helped immensely. It decreased courier and mail costs, along with retrieval times. But silos formed by locally maintained image databases presented obstacles to seeing a record of what was already online. At times, users would not request information because they didn't know it existed, and instead replicated research efforts and analysis.

Scan it here or there — see it anywhere

In May of 2006, St. Paul Guarantee launched its document repository project. Mated to the distributed file system, this strategy gives an analyst in Montreal or Vancouver visibility into the files stored in Toronto and vice versa. "No matter where a document is scanned and where it might be stored physically, the database logic of the system makes that document visible to users at all of the branches," says Van Dusen.

"Our goal is to provide all analysts access to client information as it pertains to their particular lines of business. That will mean more accurate modeling and analysis. And that should mean better risk management, which is the basis of the surety bond business."

Sometimes a shared resource isn't the best answer

Initially, St. Paul Guarantee used multifunctional devices (MFDs) — networked machines with scanning, printing, and fax capabilities — to capture document images. These were deployed as shared resources in a few centralized locations per office. Administrative staff and co-op students handled the bulk of the scanning of client file documents.

However, one class of documents was too important to be delayed by the lines and interruptions encountered at the MFDs when used for printing or duplicating lengthy client files. In addition, it took a separate post-scanning process to convert documents to a text-searchable format (PDF).

Making the case for a dedicated scanner

"We needed to share a record of incoming invoices, letters of credit, checks and other payment instruments without waiting for the normal scanning process," says Van Dusen. "I wanted to give the Head Office accounting department in Toronto a way to cut to the head of the queue, as it were. A dedicated scanner would be the ideal."

The price of an MFD ruled out purchasing one for the accounting department's sole use. Van Dusen considered moving an existing MFD to a cubicle near the accounting department, but that would have also required significant training time and an investment in new software. "We are able to accomplish the same thing with the **Kodak** Scan Station 100 with such minimal setup that it is nearly a turnkey solution," states Van Dusen.

A ready-to-go solution with all the right features

"Our requirements eliminated a conventional check scanning machine," Van Dusen says, "since we don't need the additional MICR scanning. We did need something that scaled to legal-sized documents. It had to take less space than a traditional scanner and its host PC, and it would require a bare minimum of user interaction. The Scan Station 100's simple interface and compact design, coupled with its capabilities, made it the idea solution."

The Scan Station 100 was designed as a walk-up capture station that requires minimal operator training. It's quite possibly the easiest-to-use capture device found in the general office environment today. The Scan Station 100 is a standalone solution, requiring no host PC or application software. It connects to an existing network and makes use of existing network-shared services such as DNS, DHCP and SMTP in order to communicate with other network devices or destinations. The rotating color touch screen offers a simple, graphical user interface (GUI) to operate the device, preview images, and

direct the output. The controls are similar to those found on a cell phone, walk-up kiosk or digital camera.

The Scan Station 100 captures documents at speeds up to 25 pages per minute and offers Kodak's renowned Perfect Page image processing and paper handling — all in a footprint that fits any desktop.

"The Scan Station 100's simple interface and compact design, coupled with its capabilities, make it the ideal solution."

Tim Van Dusen

Capturing high-value documents without leaving your seat

The Scan Station 100 now resides in the accounting department, conveniently located directly behind Receivables Clerk Tatiana Petrone, the primary user. In the course of processing incoming documents during the day, the user accumulates batches of documents. When Petrone is ready, she swivels her chair around and inserts a batch in the Scan Station 100, pushes an icon on the control panel, and removes the scanned documents when done.

These documents are automatically converted to PDF and delivered to her online workspace. She renames them as necessary and files them in the appropriate electronic folders. Says Van Dusen, "Tatiana has had nothing but praise for the device. I wouldn't be surprised if the Scan Station 100 earns an affectionate nickname before too long."

Having the dedicated machine in accounting makes life easier in other ways, as well. Analysts can access proof of payment independently of the accounting department while speaking with clients and brokers. This virtually eliminates interrupting the accounting department's own workflow to fulfill information requests from underwriters. It also reduces time to information for the analysts, thereby improving customer service levels.

On a more strategic level, St. Paul Guarantee's Scan Station 100 solution enables the company to maintain a centralized accounting department that can satisfy the needs of all three branch offices for continued economies of scale.

Solid support

According to Van Dusen, setting up the Scan Station 100 was easy, with one bump at the beginning. "Our initial unit had a hard drive failure. But Kodak acquitted itself wonderfully. We received a replacement from our supplier the next day, followed by a call from the support manager at Kodak. After that, I heard from the Canadian Sales Manager and then again from the U.S. & C. Marketing Manager.

"Based on the conversation I've had with their people, Kodak is already looking to improve the Scan Station 100 based on user feedback from customers like us — the first Scan Station customers in Canada. You can say I am pretty impressed with Kodak's responsiveness."

Next up: mailroom scanning

Eventually, Van Dusen expects to move the Scan Station 100 from the accounting department to the mailroom. Here, all communications coming in as paper will be scanned by mail clerks and then distributed electronically as searchable PDF files. So the movement of paper won't go any further than the mailroom.

"As the backlog of 'on-the-desk' hardcopy is eliminated, the MFDs' functions will be supplanted by the Scan Station 100," Van Dusen notes. "We plan to equip our other branches with Scan Stations by mid 2008. As it is, the ease of use of the Scan Station and the simple instructions required for our users make this an ideal device for our current implementation and our future needs."

To learn more about **Kodak** Document Imaging products and services, contact your Authorized Reseller of **Kodak** products, call 1-800-944-6171, or log on to www.kodak.com/go/docimaging.