



Case History

Hugh Symons embraces intelligent, high-volume scanning for consolidation, profit and growth

Hugh Symons Information Management is a large, established UK document scanning bureau with a wealth of experience in records management spanning thirty years. Over 150 staff members serve a customer base of more than 500 from the Hugh Symons head office in Poole and regional centres in Bradford and Sidmouth.

The company has made significant inroads into many sectors including health care, central and local government, financial services and human relations. Hugh Symons scans, processes and archives a wide variety of documents, records and project files varying considerably in age, fragility, size, quality and thickness.

Hugh Symons has always been a dedicated Kodak bureau, capturing fifteen million images per month using twelve Kodak i600 scanners and four Kodak i800s. Kodak has served the company well, providing outstanding service and support throughout their long-standing relationship.

SETTING CLEAR OBJECTIVES

In April 2005 the Hugh Symons management team conducted a major business review to evaluate the company's efficiency levels and competitive position. According to Chris Booth, Scanning Services Director at Hugh Symons, the team recognized the need to consolidate operating costs.

"The success of any scanning bureau lies in its ability to capture as many images as possible, at the lowest possible cost, without compromising quality. Hugh Symons is no exception. Labour costs represent a significant proportion of our total operating costs, and each Kodak scanner requires one dedicated operator. We realized that we could reduce costs, boost profitability and improve service by consolidating our scanning operation," explains Mr. Booth.



The management team also examined the company's service portfolio and identified a range of diversification opportunities that would enable Hugh Symons to achieve business growth and competitive edge. These new value-added services clearly required a more intelligent approach to scanning.

With consolidation and diversification in mind, Hugh Symons began its search for a solution. Following a thorough investigation of the market for high-volume intelligent scanners, and a visit to the 2006 Philadelphia AIIM Show, the management team short-listed three products, one of which was IBML's ImageTrac® High Volume Colour Scanning Platform. The management team eliminated one contender based on poor build quality, then sent

sample documents to the two remaining suppliers for processing. IBML emerged the clear winner.

HIGH-VOLUME INTELLIGENT SCANNING ADDS VALUE

Mr. Booth explains: "Initially we had concerns about the ability of these high-volume scanners to process the wide variety of documents that we handle, however IBML's ImageTrac performed well. The ImageTrac solution also has the intelligence to recognise, extract and capture data automatically, without manual intervention, which opens the door for Hugh Symons to accept new and different data processing projects. The ImageTrac is solid and well-built, and we felt certain it would stand up to the rigorous demands of our business."

Before making a final decision Mr. Booth wanted to be sure that IBML had the presence and size to support the company in the future. "We visited IBML's headquarters in Alabama, and we also visited a large IBML customer whose business was running very smoothly. We were impressed by the company's manufacturing scale and the range of high-quality, in-house expertise we found there. We returned home confident in IBML's ability to directly control product quality and development in the future," says Mr. Booth. "The icing on the cake was IBML's support partnership with Kodak, who we trust to deliver timely, competent service."

INVESTING TO WIN

In October 2006 Hugh Symons invested more than £300,000 in IBML, buying two ImageTrac units for the Poole headquarters and one for the Bradford facility. Integration with Hugh Symons' own production management software was challenging although IBML worked hard to ease the process, tailoring the ImageTrac's DocNetics software to ensure a close fit.

A handful of Kodak scanners were retained for contingency purposes, and to handle extraordinarily fragile or troublesome documents that are prone to causing paper jams if scanned at high volume. Currently eighty per cent of scanning projects are run on the ImageTrac units, although this is set to rise as data processing projects increase. Currently fifteen to twenty million images per month are being captured much faster and more cost effectively than before, allowing ample capacity for business growth. Last year there was a backlog of projects awaiting scanning, with a lead time averaging six weeks. That lead time has now halved.

COST EFFECTIVE, VALUE-ADDED SOLUTIONS

From a consolidation standpoint immediate results are clear to see. The number of operators has reduced from sixteen to three, enabling Hugh Symons to redirect valuable resources to important preparation work. Peak periods that require additional shifts are accommodated quickly and cost effectively with just one operator, and the management team is enjoying supervising just two or three operators rather than a large team. The change has resulted in a more pleasant, relaxed working environment for all.

From a diversification perspective Hugh Symons is now actively targeting new data processing business. For example the ImageTrac has the intelligence to scan a document, extract data automatically at high speed, interpret that data and use it to populate financial or medical databases that generate management reports. This kind of intelligent data handling will benefit both existing and new customers and will provide Hugh Symons with competitive edge across the board.

Visit www.scanning-document.co.uk where you can view a video of the IBML solution at Hugh Symons in action, or email chris.booth@hughsymons.com for more information.



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