



by Rich Miller

Implementing a platform that supports both payment and document processing not only allows government operations to consolidate systems, it also enables them to implement shared services to process work on behalf of other departments—a perfect way to better utilize the scanning infrastructure now employed by most states, particularly in seasons when return volumes are low.

A recent customer win by ibml is more than just another feather in the company's cap. It is also indicative of two trends that have taken hold in the revenue departments of state governments and are expanding to county and municipal governments: the push towards shared services and consolidated payments and document processing. Based on its momentum in shared services and the flexibility of its document scanning platform, ibml believes that it is well positioned to capitalize on these trends.

ibml recently won a contract from the revenue department of a state government to deliver two ImageTrac 3ex scanners. The ImageTrac 3ex is a high-speed document scanner that features bi-tonal, grayscale, and color scanning; barcode and patchcode readers; an ink jet printer; sort pockets; multi-feed detection; and color touch-screen controls. But most importantly, in terms of the state's business requirements, the ImageTrac 3ex also provides MICR and ICR reading and the ability to scan multiple document types (such as checks and full-page documents) co-mingled.

These last two capabilities were critical for supporting the state's automation plans.

Looking to improve operations efficiency, the state wanted a single document scanning platform for both its payments and documents. Previously, the state processed its payments (or remittances) on a standalone system and keyed amounts from tax documents into an internally-developed proprietary solution. Since there was no automated way to reconcile the amounts on the checks and documents, the department had to manually review each return before processing to ensure that the check and document amounts matched. If the amounts differed, the return was suspended and a letter was sent to the taxpayer informing them of the error. Needless to say, the process was extremely inefficient.

By processing both checks and documents on the same platform, the state hopes to speed processing turnaround, eliminate the need for a standalone document system, and reduce its manual tasks.

The state is hardly alone in its thinking.

Challenged with tight capital budgets in the aftermath of the recession, more government operations are consolidating their payments and document processing. According to the findings of the 2010 Government Payments and Document Processing Survey by IAPP-TAWPI—sponsored in part by ibml—86.5 percent of state, county and municipal government operations said they now process both payments and (non-payment related) documents on the same platform. Only 9.6 percent of government entities that responded to the question indicated that their operation only processes payments, while just 3.8 percent of respondents said their operation only processes documents.

State revenue agencies in particular are processing both payments and documents in their operations. Of the state revenue agencies that responded to the question, 96.4 percent said they process payments and documents together, while just 3.6 percent of respondents said they only process payments.

Implementing a platform that supports both payment and document processing not only allows government operations to consolidate systems, it also enables them to implement shared services to process work on behalf of other departments—a perfect way to better utilize the scanning infrastructure now employed by most states, particularly in seasons when return volumes are low.

The state that is purchasing the ImageTrac 3ex scanners is taking the concept one step further: it plans to offer its payments and document processing services to county governments and municipalities.

It will likely find plenty of takers.

About half (48.6 percent) of all respondents to the IAPP-TAWPI government survey indicated that they process another department's work with their own. Fifty percent of the state revenue agencies that responded to the question process another department's work with their own. Among county government entities that responded to the question, 60 percent process another department's work; 57.1 percent of municipalities indicated that they process another department's work with their own.

With its ability to scan multiple document types and its capabilities for both MICR reading of checks and ICR reading of amounts on tax return documents and PC-generated checks, ibml's ImageTrac platform was ideal for the state revenue agency that recently purchased two ImageTrac 3exp devices.

But, more importantly, the functionality positions ibml for future success as more government entities—state, county, and municipal—look to consolidate systems and deploy shared services.

*Rich Miller
is a Business Development
Manager for ibml.*

*He can be reached at
rmiller@ibml.com*