

Document Imaging Report

Business Trends on Converting Paper Processes to Electronic Format

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ibml Raises the Bar for Desktop Scanning

ibml continues to push the limits of what users can expect from document scanners. Its ultra high-volume ImageTrac series can reach rated speeds of more than 400 ppm and have helped the Birmingham, AL vendor establish its reputation as the leader in that market segment. A few years ago, ibml started coming downstream with the introduction of its first desktop model—which was still rated at 150 ppm. Of course, ibml's scanners are about more than just speeds. They are also known for their ability to handle mixed batches of documents, which is assisted by in-line recognition and document sorting capabilities.

Earlier this week, ibml raised the bar for desktop production scanning even further with the introduction of its new ImageTracDS 1210. As its name indicates, the 1210 is rated at 210 ppm when outputting 200 or 300 dpi images. Like ibml's other DS models, it includes two outsort trays—a fairly unique desktop feature, and has the ability to do outsorting at rated speeds of 190 ppm. The 1210 also features five multi-feed sensors and comes packaged with ibml's SoftTrac Capture Suite (SCS).

"We are launching the highest performance desktop scanner ever put in the market," said Dan Lucarini, CMO, for ibml.

"Configured with SCS to enable inline recognition and sorting, the DS 1210 starts at around \$50,000. Combined with its rated speeds of over 200 ppm, we are breaking price/performance barriers. We are essentially offering a scanner, with software, that is lower in price than what some other vendors are selling scanners alone for. We want to show the market that the total cost of ownership for such a high-speed device with sorting capabilities can be a lot lower than they think."

Indeed, ibml's ultra-high volume scanners, the ImageTrac line, typically sell for well into six figures. "We are the industry leader in the ultra high-volume category, but we continue to push down into smaller applications, with more affordable solutions that address similar business problems," said Lucarini. "We have a number of large BPOs [business process outsourcers] that use our larger ImageTracs, but we also come across lower volume jobs, where the larger units can't be cost justified. These smaller jobs have the same requirements to deal with mixed batches, which users want to be able to feed into one area—and allow the scanner and software to figure it out. The higher speeds of the DS 1210 will enable BPOs to deliver their services more profitably than they could with our previous DS models."

ibml's first two DS models, the 1150 and the 1085, were rated at 150 ppm and 85 ppm respectively. The 1150, which was introduced in 2012 [see *DIR* 6/22/12], is being retired in favor the new DS 1155, which was announced at the same time as the 1210. Rated at 155 ppm at up to 300 dpi, the DS 1155 offers sorting at up to 150 ppm and also includes five multi-feed detection sensors. "Both new models feature the same cameras as the 1085, but the feeding and output trays have been enhanced," said Lucarini.

The 1155 and 1210 feature a 550-sheet feeder tray and 550- and 100-sheet output trays. Their dimensions are 28-in. L x 19 in. W x 16 in. H, and they each weigh 95 pounds. "The DS scanners can definitely fit on a desktop, and there is still room for stacks of mail," said Lucarini. "Basically, with these devices, a single operator can process more information than they ever could before."

The need for speed

Lucarini noted that there are several market dynamics at work, which are driving businesses to want to process more information faster. "Organizations have a need to gain insight from their content so they can better engage with their customers," he said. "Document capture is an important technology for gaining

insight into information trapped in customer communication documents. And information from these documents needs to be captured faster than ever because analytics systems are being driven by customer data, and CIOs want to run analytics daily.

“Organizations are also under continuing pressure to automate every business process—take humans out and eliminate manual steps. This automation helps increase the speed at which information can be made available. And the monster under the bed is that this needs to be done in a protected and secure manner—which our capture solutions can facilitate.

“These are some market drivers we are focusing on, and I think you will see those topics discussed at the upcoming **AIIM** Conference (being held April 26-28 in New Orleans). We see them every day from our customers and prospects. The market has a need for faster and more intelligent scanning solutions.”

Lucarini also noted that contrary to what many people believe, the volume of paper being used by businesses is not decreasing significantly. “Only 17% of respondents to the AIIM PaperFree 2015 Study, which was released in November, said they work in a paper free office,” said Lucarini, who currently sits on the AIIM board. “Thirty-one percent said their offices are piled high with paper.

“We may be making progress toward the vision of paperless processes, which the industry has been working on for 25-30 years, but paper is persistent. There is still enough paper around that it can cause huge problems. Sixty-percent of respondents to the PaperFree Study said that more than half the invoices they receive are paper. This is after 25 years of working on electronic invoicing standards.

“Also, last year, **InfoTrends** did one of the most comprehensive studies on document capture in the U.S. market in 10 years. They found that, over the next two years, more than 70% of organizations expect their paper volumes to either increase (35.5%) or stay the same (38%).”

To deal with this paper, despite an increasing number of document capture options, users are still relying primarily on document scanners. “According to **Harvey Spencer Associates**, in 2014, 50% of all capture was done through document scanners; by 2019, HSA projects that figure still to be 45%,” said Lucarini. (Other capture input sources include MFPs, e-mail, faxes, and mobile.) “So, while everyone is celebrating the growth of input from mobile and electronic processes, over 80% of capture input is still coming from paper documents—when you add together the numbers for scanners, fax, and MFPs.”

Lucarini also told us that **IDC** is projecting that in 2017 there will be 56,000 production class scanners sold, up 7% from 2014. “Despite all this talk about going paperless, the market for scanners continues to grow,” he said. “Businesses

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still have to deal with paper problems, and their problems are more acute now because budgets are not getting any larger. Operations managers are being asked to digest high volumes of paper and not getting any more money for their scanning operations. As a result, they are looking for better, faster technology that can help them reduce their total cost of ownership.”

A versatile device

In addition to full-sized paper documents, users still continue to rely on paper checks, especially for B2B transactions. “There are still billions of B2B transactions conducted every year with checks,” Lucarini told *DIR*. “Our scanners’ ability to process checks along with other documents and sort the checks into a separate stack so they can go to their final resting place, as the images are used for Check 21, is a time saver with a nice ROI.”

One nice feature on all ibml’s DS models is users’ ability to align stacks with the left side of the DS feeders. “Most other desktop scanners have a center-feeding design,” said Lucarini. “With the DS models, users can jog all their documents and then drop them in flush left, which saves prep time [compared to trying to center batches of mixed sized documents].”

ibml has also seen an evolving niche market for its DS units in ballot processing. “Our in-line processing capabilities are able to sort out spoiled ballots,” said Lucarini. “Traditionally, users have had to purchase specialized ballot processing machines, which can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. It’s more economical to purchase an off-the-shelf DS device and apply specialized software to it.

“Last year, one of our partners utilized 100 DS scanners to handle an election cycle in a Middle Eastern country, and the feedback we received is that they worked flawlessly. We have another partner that is introducing the DS to U.S. counties and states. This is an example of a specialized niche for the DS, but we’re also still seeing demand for them just for sorting separator sheets. With the new 1210, running at 200 ppm, ROI for just that can be pretty significant.”

Importance of integration

ibml continues to do a nice job addressing a multitude of high-volume scanning environments. Its continued development of hardware and software offerings has helped it evolve into a true solutions provider. “Especially when you are talking about DS units, you really can’t separate the hardware from the software,” said Lucarini.

We concluded by asking Lucarini what he felt the



With rated scanning speeds at over 200 ppm and outsourcing capabilities at 190 ppm, ibml’s new ImageTracDS 1210 is one of the most powerful desktop scanners on the market.

difference was between ibml, which continues to move deeper into hardware/software integration, and organizations like **HP** and **Lexmark**, which, after making major software acquisitions to complement their hardware businesses, have decided to split their hardware and software into different organizations. “ibml is very different from those companies,” he said. “We specialize in creating high performance solutions for digitizing paper—focusing on transforming it as quickly as possible into information that our customers can analyze, gain insights from, and use to drive their business processes,” he said. “In these types of solutions, it’s very important that everything works together flawlessly. The MFP vendors you mentioned aren’t really focused on the same market.”

For more information: <http://bit.ly/ibmlDS1210>