

Pitney Bowes Quadruples Capacity with Eight ibml Scanners



Pitney Bowes is a leading document process outsourcing company employing more than 800 staff in France. With an annual turnover of 6.3 billion dollars, the Pitney Bowes Group helps organisations of all types and sizes to manage and process critical mail items and documents effectively, whether they are paper or digital in origin.

Seizing new opportunities

Until 2006 Pitney Bowes Asterion used a variety of small to mid-size Kodak production scanners to capture the majority of incoming documents. As business grew and projects increased in size, the Pitney Bowes Asterion management team recognised the need to introduce high-volume intelligent scanning into the production process. In doing so they could scan much higher volumes of documents and process a variety of document types and sizes quickly and efficiently without increasing operator numbers and maintenance. As well as delivering operational benefits, this strategy would allow business development into new markets.

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Mr Michel Goutaudier, head of the Document Management Business Unit at Pitney Bowes Asterion

A project team, comprising representatives from IT, production, sales and marketing, began searching for a supplier whose offering would address new market challenges.

Testing criteria

Pitney Bowes Asterion needed a high-volume scanning solution that could do the following:

- process new document types and sizes, from small tickets to A3
- reduce operator numbers
- reduce frequency and cost of maintenance
- improve lead times
- increase productivity
- deliver reliability

The project team began by defining the selection criteria upon which their purchase decision would be based:

- accurate, high-speed scanning
- clear image quality
- simple integration with Pitney Bowes Asterion legacy systems
- ergonomic design and ease of use
- cost-effective, value for money
- proven track record

A number of worthy contenders were identified, including the ibml ImageTrac, which is sold and supported by Kodak in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Pitney Bowes Asterion welcomed the idea of maintaining its long-established relationship with Kodak and believed the company would benefit from continuity of support; however, it was not a foregone conclusion that ibml would win the business without proving the ImageTrac's capabilities. Two suppliers were short-listed and underwent rigorous trials to test performance, operating flexibility and support.

Pitney Bowes Asterion was impressed by the level of service delivered by ibml, and the operators particularly appreciated the ImageTrac's ease of use. The project team thoroughly analysed all test results and concluded that the ImageTrac was the system best suited to meet their exacting requirements.

A rapid rollout

The first ImageTrac scanner was successfully installed at Pitney Bowes Asterion in 2007, and soon afterwards the management team decided to extend the rollout. The number of ImageTrac units increased to eight by 2009 and processing capacity increased to 1.5 million documents a day. A reduced number of Kodak scanners remain in operation at Pitney Bowes Asterion; they are used for low-volume projects and in some cases are taken to customer sites when local capture is required.

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Mr Michel Goutaudier

"The high performance, reliability and accuracy of the ImageTrac have enabled us to quadruple our throughput," says Michel Goutaudier, Head of the Document Management Business Unit at Pitney Bowes Asterion. "With the ImageTrac we can target very large deals, which previously would have been unachievable. We can now offer highly cost-competitive terms for these customers that deliver rapid return on investment for them."

Speaking about the return on investment for Pitney Bowes Asterion, Mr Goutaudier is quick to point out that the impact is more than financial: "We experienced a rapid return on investment in terms of covering the initial cost of the system, but the true value of the ImageTrac comes from the fact that we have been able to seize new market opportunities. This has paid far greater dividends for us and will contribute to the growth and success of our business long into the future."

Evolutionary change

Staff members located at the scanning centre are excited to be part of this evolutionary change. "Our operators and preparation staff enjoy working in a growing, state-of-the-art environment, and they view the ImageTrac as a very positive addition to our business. Physically our facility has doubled in size – to 1000sqm – which has added to the stability and security of our document processing operation," says Mr Goutaudier. "In addition, the ability of the ImageTrac to apply intelligence as part of the scanning process has enabled the effective automation of many project processes."

The modular nature of the ImageTrac solution has proved particularly important. Pitney Bowes Asterion has been able to add components such as pockets, inkjet printing and ICR, as and when required. This has saved cost and increased flexibility, enabling them to respond to new requirements quickly and easily as soon as they can be cost-justified.

"We have found ibml to be an honest and diligent supplier," comments Mr Goutaudier. "We implemented in phases, and we originally planned to use the same ImageTrac model throughout our organisation. Following installation of the first three units, ibml recommended that we select a different model for the remainder, which was better suited to our ongoing requirements and was also less expensive. ibml was determined to provide the right unit for the job and we benefited in every respect – capability and cost!"



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