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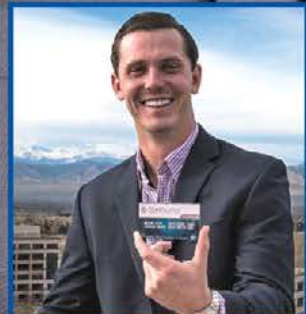
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Get the Most Out of Your Operations with Document Management

Strive for a Competitive Advantage by Digitizing Your Paper Stacks with Scanning Hardware

By Nobuhiko Kitajima

Moving into summertime, it is a natural time for small business owners and leaders to take stock of business imperatives and strive for any competitive advantage available. But it's not just your actual business that you need to focus on. A critical part of keeping your edge involves reviewing how your overall operations are performing, particularly from a technological standpoint, and thinking about how technology can complement your business.

When picturing a home or small business office desk, many will include stacks of documents and clutter in their vision. These piles are often not an exaggeration and are many times unorganized and most importantly unneeded. In fact, a 2015 survey by Software Advice found that workers in traditional offices spend an average of six hours per week physically searching for paper documents, while many workers in digital offices use document management software to immediately locate the documents they need.

“If small businesses do not take advantage of technological innovations, they will find themselves significantly at risk when compared to their competitors.”

In my 35 years of experience in the industry, one thing I've seen time and again is that adapting to technology advances can make all the difference such as in this example and in many other applications.

Technology as a Competitive Advantage

A small business owner's role requires focus on more than just day-to-day operations to remain competitive. Research shows that while small businesses understand the power of technology to impact their company, there is still progress to be made. According to a 2017 SMB Group study, only 32 percent

of respondents recognized that technology is helping them significantly improve business outcomes. While it can be difficult for the small business owner to keep up with the dizzying pace of technological change in this digital age, it is essential to stay ahead of the curve by leveraging the latest solutions to find efficiencies and improve performance in daily processes. If small businesses do not take advantage of technological innovations, they will find themselves significantly at risk when compared to their competitors.

Scan Your Way to Success — The Benefits of Digitizing Your Documents

Many small businesses are well along the path of implementing digital processes on a range of fronts, although this can often be thought of as a daunting task. Regardless of where you are in terms of digitizing your operations, though, one area to focus on in 2017 is introducing (or increasing) scanning for document management purposes. More businesses are seeking to introduce scanning initiatives within their organizations in order to enhance performance, as part of an overall move to embrace digital transformation and gain a competitive advantage. A survey by InfoTrends in December 2016 found that 52.5% of respondents cited a transition from paper to electronic initiatives within their company as the key driver for scanning within their organization. Clearly, there is a real opportunity for small businesses to make an immediate operational improvement by implementing (or optimizing) a scan-to-digital capability.

There are a number of benefits that come with implementing a robust document management setup, including easier document retrieval, increased security, better backup/recovery options (particularly via cloud-based storage solutions) and the obvious benefits of editing documents digitally, thus avoiding multiple rounds of manual-entry updates from hard copies. For those needing to focus on regulatory compliance, a digital document management system can streamline and standardize the process by automating many of the repetitive requirements.



Implement digital processes to improve organization and increase productivity.

Another fundamental benefit of moving to a digital environment through scanning is that it (literally) frees up space. Many home or small offices with a limited footprint are able to free up critical space by reducing their overall paper load, and also avoid the hassles that come with implementing and managing off-site storage.

These benefits all translate to a better setup, with the potential for a leaner, more efficient, more profitable and even more eco-friendly operation, all while creating a more productive environment for employees (of course, you'll never entirely stop the flow of paper crossing your desk).

Choosing the Right Setup

Small business owners searching for the right scanning device should look at products on the market — such as Canon's award-winning imageFORMULA document scanner line — that are designed with the small business owner's needs in mind. Since your scanning may be more ad hoc than mission critical, look for a product that fits your budget while still allowing for flexibility in terms of document type and software integration, and delivers a combination of quality with ease of use.

These benefits all translate to a better setup, with the potential for a leaner, more efficient, more profitable and even more eco-friendly operation. With the right scanning hardware and a dedicated approach, small business owners of all sizes can reap the benefits of a document management system. **HBM**

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