

CASE STUDY: DIGITAL MAIL

Innovative Solution for Multinational Professional Services Company

Challenge

Devise a digital mail solution that would provide enhanced productivity and maximize ROI. As more consultants become remote workers, the firm needed to maintain a 100% compliance with network security standards.

Solution

Integrating a Panasonic KV-S1057C 65 ppm/120 ipm mixed document scanner coupled with a Panasonic KV-SSM100 Network Scanner Adaptor and Digital Mail Distribution products from Image Architects, this professional services company installed the solution at their mail hub operations.

Result

A substantial reduction in consultants' non-productive hours and commutation expenses coupled with increased efficiency. Expectations have been exceeded to the point that mail not originally scheduled to be processed by their Digital Mail system, is now being transported from a nearby office and processed at their mail hub.

In an effort to increase productivity and decrease commuting turmoil in one of their Washington-area offices, a multinational professional services company has deployed a high-security mail delivery solution to help its consultants work from home.

Since both offices where the scanning system is installed deal largely with federal contracts, security was arguably the primary consideration in designing the system. Simply relying on a high-security email system was not an option because many government agencies still deliver RFPs, research reports and contracts on paper. Forwarding snail mail correspondence to the consultants was also not an option because much of it consists of documents requiring immediate action. Corporate specifications called for a secure system that did not sacrifice timeliness in order to achieve bulletproof security. The eventual answer for the digital mail installation, was a unique process of scanning unopened envelopes and emailing notifications and meta-data to the designated addressees.

Consultants were queried for their response to a system that would send them a secure link telling them what was waiting for them in the mailroom and give them the option of deciding which items they wanted to personally pick up. Once the overwhelmingly positive response was tabulated, the issue shifted to finding the optimum scanner and scanner control device to power the system.

Security Challenges Were Paramount

To ensure that access to document content remains solely in the hands of the designated recipients, the initial scan was of the unopened front of the sealed envelope. In practice this has allowed recipients to determine whether documents are innocuous enough to be opened, scanned and emailed to them or held, unopened, for them to claim in person more than 90% of the time. Or, as one person involved in the project put it, “figuring out that a bulging #10 envelope from the FBI is different than a solicitation for a 2.3% APR credit card isn’t a brain twister.”

What wasn’t as easy was finding a high-speed scanner capable of performing mixed batch scanning of a vast array of envelope sizes, thicknesses and paper types without constant stalls, jams and “beeps” demanding human intervention. According to the business operations manager, “At first we tried using a few scanners that we already had in-house, but they weren’t fast enough and presented us with potential network problems down the line.” Since this professional services company has a rigid policy prohibiting connection of USB devices to a PC, the only scanners considered as replacements were Ethernet-enabled units from Panasonic and three other major vendors.

According to Image Architects President Peter Nirenberg, a shootout between network scanners of the right capacity and speed from each vendor revealed the Panasonic KV-S1057C’s document feeder to be clearly superior at processing unopened envelopes of differing size, thickness and material. Equally important, the KV-S1057C proved to be the sole entrant in the “shootout” to be truly plug-and-play compatible with the professional services company’s Ethernet network. Using Panasonic scanners they would be able to upgrade or expand the system without the tweaks, software updates and/or driver upgrades required by traditional scanning software packages.

“Replacing the 65 page a minute KV-S1057C with one of our 200 page per minute scanners or adding a second scanner to the network would be a simple matter of removing and replacing just the scanner,” Panasonic Partner Sales Manager Bill Kohler noted. “None of the other contenders offered that level of flexibility.”

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A Simple, Well Designed Solution

Working directly with Panasonic engineers, Image Architects, and the Digital Mail application developers, they customized the Panasonic KV-SSM100 Network Scanner Solution to present a streamlined, tablet-based GUI for the mailroom staff. It consisted of three large on-screen buttons, one for scanning envelopes, one for scanning content, and one for scanning and merging both sides of a postcard into a single image. No other interactions are required.

Asked whether the deployment as a whole went smoothly, the answer was an emphatic “yes.” “We understood what we wanted to accomplish and what we hoped the software and hardware would allow us to do. What we didn’t understand was the tactical implication. So in a sense our expectations were unknown, but the outcome was definitely positive,” further notes the business operations manager.

Positive enough for consideration of expanding the scope of the deployment by rolling the digital mail system out to as many as 80 regional offices. Additionally, increasing the number of consultants being offered the work at home opportunity, and broadening the system’s scope by adding Panasonic oversized document scanners to integrate journals, publications and other over-sized documents into the mix.