

Document Imaging Report

Business Trends on Converting Paper Processes to Electronic Format

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Service Bureau Cuts Prep Costs With Multi Stream

It's often been said that the adoption of color scanning will not occur en masse until applications are developed to leverage it. What has not been said often enough is that these color applications need to be significantly better than existing black-and-white imaging applications. There is an inertia to black-and-white scanning that is proving hard to overcome with incremental and/or aesthetic improvements.

In most cases, color document imaging just hasn't proven it provides significant benefits. However, there are pockets where innovative use of color is paying off big-time. One of those is at Phoenix, AZ-based service bureau **OptiScan**. By creatively employing the Multi Stream output capabilities of its **Panasonic KV-SS905C** scanner, OptiScan has been able to more efficiently process both low-quality documents as well as mixed batches of color and black-and-white.

OptiScan was founded in 1991 as an aperture card scanning service. In 1996, it expanded its services to include film and paper. "Our roots involve working with engineering departments, and aerospace is still our primary market," explained Al Hawkins, president of OptiScan. "We also do work in the medical and financial services/mortgage markets."

Recently, OptiScan landed a job processing engineering documents for **Honeywell**. "The documents were very old, and all of them had blue grid lines on them," he said.

"We found that if you lowered the scanning threshold to bring out some of the lighter characters, the blue lines became so thick they blurred the letters. However, when we scanned the documents in grayscale, they turned out perfect."

To minimize file sizes, OptiScan did not want to output all the documents as grayscale images. "We settled on leveraging the Multi Stream technology to output a bi-tonal and grayscale image of each document," Hawkins told *DIR*. "A quality control operator views the bi-tonal image. He has the option of making manual image enhancements or accepting the bi-tonal image as it appears. If he decides the bi-tonal image is not good enough, he touches one button and the grayscale image is automatically saved—sight unseen. If the bi-tonal image is kept, the grayscale image is thrown away."

OptiScan has leveraged this same concept to improve its efficiency in processing mixed batches of color and black-and-white documents. "In the color jobs we've had, the color documents almost always have been intermixed with black-and-white documents," Hawkins said. "Formerly, we had to pre-sort the color documents, scan them on a different scanner, and then bring the images back together to create multi-page documents.

"Now, for intermixed jobs, we scan color and black-and-white documents in the same batch. The quality control operator views a color version of the image. If he

doesn't see any color information, he presses a button and the black-and-white image is automatically saved while the color is disposed of. Alternatively, he can choose to keep the color image and dispose of the black-and-white. Typically, we then save the documents as multi-page PDF files."

OptiScan's internally developed capture software *Scantastic* made leveraging the Multi Stream capabilities a natural. "Because we work with a lot of large-format, engineering drawings, we couldn't find an off-the-shelf capture product that filled all our needs," explained Hawkins. "So, we developed our own, leveraging tools from the likes of **Spicer, Pixel, and TMS Sequoia**.

"*Scantastic* is designed to handle two images of each scan. Originally, we did this to account for errors that can be made in manual image adjustment. When doing manual adjustments, we leave the option open of going back to the original file."

According to Hawkins, leveraging Multi Stream has made OptiScan more competitive on its bids. "We've been able to cut out a lot of the prep and re-scan time that would have been inherent in certain jobs," he said. "This enables us to keep our costs down and offer lower fees to end users."

For more information: **OptiScan**, Phoenix, AZ, PH (602) 789-7800. ■