

Document Imaging Report

Business Trends on Converting Paper Processes to Electronic Format

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Making Scanning Simpler

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A pair of new applications targeting distributed and desktop users are designed to reduce the complexities of capturing documents.

Maybe it has something to do with a slowdown in traditional document capture sales due to the weakened economy...or maybe it was just a coincidence. Whatever the case, last week, we did a pair of briefings on products designed to spread document capture to the masses. One is **Kofax's** new *Desktop* application, a \$29 download designed to scan-enable **Microsoft Office**. The second is a netbook-style appliance being introduced by start-up **Living Analytics**.

"Our whole mission at Living Analytics is to improve the ease-of-use of document scanning and make it available to average people," said Chris Riley, a capture industry veteran and founder of Living Analytics. "Historically, the **AIIM** community has been too busy educating itself—you have resellers teaching resellers and vendors teaching vendors. But not a lot of people are addressing the average person."

"There's definitely been feedback floating around for years that scanning is too hard," said Anthony Macciola, CTO of Kofax. "We've already taken a couple swipes at making it more accessible. We're not targeting the consumer market with *Desktop*. We are looking at individual users within a commercial environment that need to capture documents for their own personal use."

"*Desktop* is really about rounding out our product portfolio. We have *Kofax Capture* to address the SMB and the enterprise. *Kofax Express* is targeted at

the workgroup. But, we've had a hole in the individual or desktop market."

The final rung of distributed capture

It's Macciola view that *Desktop* can take the Kofax suite to the edge of the enterprise. "When Kofax was founded, it focused on batch capture in a centralized environment," Macciola told *DIR*. "In the mid-1990s, we started to move toward distributed capture, mainly by taking capture out one rung—from a centralized location to regional offices. The next phase is moving capture into field offices. We've started this through the introduction of products like our *Digital Exchange Server* (DES) [see *DIR* 5/4/07]. We expect to see a lot of growth and to drive a lot of innovation in that area over the next two to three years."

"But, we're not stopping there. With *Desktop*, we are looking at industries where business processes extend all the way out to field agents. A great example is the insurance claims process, where an adjuster might have to capture pictures of a damaged car, as well as documentation like an accident report and a driver's license. The Holy Grail of distributed capture is enabling end users to truncate paper at whatever level they choose to."

Living Analytics is also targeting distributed users. "We expect our devices to be deployed pre-configured to distributed personnel," said Riley. "Basically, the user should be able to plug in a scanner to our PDA-sized device, press scan, see an image, and then press send or save. We are

focusing on usability to the point that the user doesn't have to know anything about scanner settings like DPI, resolutions, or file formats."

As easy as printing

Indeed, both Living Analytics and Kofax have put a huge premium on ease-of-use. "With *Desktop*, one of our goals is to make scanning as easy as printing," said Macciola. "We want capture to be a single-click. We've done that through scan-enabling the **Microsoft Office** suite, including *SharePoint*."

Basically, when a user installs *Kofax Desktop* it creates a "scan" option in their *Office* and *Explorer* drop-downs. "We've introduced a pull scanning model, vs. the push model that most desktop capture alternatives utilize," said Macciola. "When a novice scanner user or knowledge worker goes to capture a document, they want to do it with as little disruption as possible. Most are working in *Outlook* or *Office* and find they need to capture a hard copy document for collaboration or to insert into a *Word* or *Excel* file."

"They want to capture from the application they are working in. They don't want to tab out to a separate application, capture the paper, and then bring the images back into *Office*. They don't tab out to a separate application for printing. Why should they have to scan? One of our goals with *Desktop* was to put scanning in *Office* the way Microsoft would have done it. We've even created an *Office 2007* look and feel."

Details on Desktop

Desktop is downloadable from the Kofax Web site. As we mentioned, a full version can be licensed for \$29. "We are not going to certify any scanners with *Desktop*, but it's designed to work with any device with a TWAIN driver," said Macciola. "Once a user installs *Desktop*, it will detect their default scanner. It's very unobtrusive. If a user doesn't like the way *Desktop* works, there is a 14-day or 50-save trial period to make a decision."

According to Stephen Kilby, VP of product marketing, Kofax, the default "fast-scan" settings that come pre-configured in *Desktop* should enable 90% of users to capture documents without any adjustments. "There is a 'definitions' button that provides access to scan settings, but we've used our knowledge and experience with batch capture to create quality images right out of the box.

"For example, *Desktop* has all the basic capabilities of VRS, but all the usual VRS buttons and controls are suppressed. From a user standpoint, they hit a single button and get an image that is cropped correctly, has the right side up, and has been captured in color or black-and-white depending on the content. For novice users, it works the way they think scanning should work."

Desktop has a preview option that enables users to reorganize pages before they are submitted to their final destination. When capturing directly to a *SharePoint* or *Explorer* folder, *Desktop* can save files as TIFFs or PDFs. In the initial version, images captured for inclusion in *Office* files are saved as individual pages within the file. Each page includes a .PNG image of the scanned document. "Later this year, we'll introduce a more advanced version of *Desktop* that includes OCR for converting images to native *Word* or *Excel* formats," said Macciola.

Desktop's integration with *SharePoint* is done through a utility where users enter their server and authentication information. "A big part of our strategy with *Desktop* involves rounding out our Microsoft strategy," said Macciola.

"Historically, we have not been as aggressive as we could have been at propagating our relationship with Microsoft. Our goal is for Microsoft to think of us when they think of capture. Whether capture is being deployed on an individual, departmental or enterprise level, we can address the entire Microsoft product stack.

"One of our unique differentiators as a Microsoft partner involves capture into *SharePoint*. *SharePoint* integration is a common theme we have across our product stack. Other Microsoft-centric agendas for us in the future include support for XPS and WIA."

We asked Macciola if Kofax has any plans to offer document image viewing and mark-up capabilities to *SharePoint* users. "There are already a lot of third-party products for that," he replied. "We see that type of solution typically getting customized on a user-by-user basis and that's not a business

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we're in."

Close Windows, keep out errors

While Kofax is embracing the Microsoft stack, Living Analytics is moving in the opposite direction. Its initial product, LivingSCAN, is designed to take Microsoft technology out of the capture equation. LivingSCAN features a proprietary operating system for capturing and delivering images with a minimal chance of error.

To ensure everything works smoothly, Living Analytics is pre-configuring its technology to work with specific scanners. "We are currently working with several leading vendors," said Riley. "When LivingSCAN formally launches in August, we expect to have support for four scanners.



*Chris Riley, founder,
Living Analytics*

"We're setting up the LivingSCAN hardware utility so that when a user plugs in a scanner, the device will automatically know which model is being utilized and invoke the correct set of commands.

"To configure a destination for images, there will be an administration mode, which will not be easy for the average user to get to. It will provide options for scanning to URLs, e-mail addresses, or FTP log-ins. We expect most of our customers to distribute everything pre-configured to their user base."

Riley described the LivingSCAN hardware as a PDA-sized device with a USB input for a scanner. The guts lie in a mini SanDisk that contains both the LivingSCAN operating system and the application information. "The mini-SD will be configured to be usable right out of the box," said Riley. "We will configure the scanner settings to produce the best image quality based on our expertise in imaging and OCR. One of the reasons we're only working with certain scanners is that we know which ones can consistently produce the best images.

"One of our goals is to lock down the scanner settings. We will provide our customers with any custom development they need, like integration into a specific ECM system, but we think being able to set a URL as a destination should be sufficient in a lot of cases.

"Once the image reaches the URL, users will be able to apply more advanced image processing and data capture. We are embracing the cloud computing and Web-services-based infrastructure that we see being deployed to handle capture workflows in the future."

Riley cited the mini-SD-centric configuration of LivingSCAN as a key to minimizing support. "As a small company, too much demand for support could kill us," he said. "The LivingSCAN's mini-SDs can be easily duplicated, which means that if something goes wrong, a user just needs to pop the mini-SD out of the hardware utility and pop in a new one. It will be fairly straightforward for our customers to support their own users."

Riley said that eliminating Windows from the scanning equation also eliminates a lot of support issues. "Using a dedicated scanning utility vs. connecting a scanner to a regular laptop eliminates a lot of potential problems associated with operating systems and non-scanning applications," he said. "We've greatly reduced the risk of viruses, for example, picked up through e-mails or the Internet. And, if a user needs support, we don't have to worry about it being related to the laptop. Through LivingSCAN, we basically remove the complexities of dealing with a Windows device.

"Plus, our PDA-sized utility is more portable than a laptop. It can fit in your pocket."

LivingSCAN will list for \$549. It will be sold through value-added distribution and bundled in SKUs with scanners. The device was shown at the recent JavaOne developers' conference in San Francisco. "We've already had talks with some fairly large potential customers and expect to have some beta customers before we launch," said Riley.

Riley concluded that Living Analytics' initial goal is to bring the portability of a PDA together with the features of a document scanner. "Eventually, cell phones may replace document scanners in mobile capture applications," he said. "But, that is down the road. There are still image quality challenges with digital cameras compared to scanners. And image quality is important, especially as you introduce downstream processes like OCR.

"We have a patent pending on capturing documents with a scanner through a PDA. Our goal as a company is to bring advanced technology around document scanning to the average user. Our hardware roadmap has two to three devices, and we have several software applications planned as well."

For more information:

<http://www.kofax.com/desktop/>;

<http://www.livingscan.com/>

<http://www.livinganalytics.com/>