FUJITSU

Case Study

4WD Accessories Manufacturer Finds New Efficiencies in Bundled Scanner, Software Solution

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Jeff Blake, Operations Manager, US Distribution, ARB

The customer

Country: United States
Industry: Automobile Accessories
Founded: 1987
Employees: 39 (US based)
Website: www.arbusa.com

The challenge

- In their small US office, paper storage was taking up a 20 x 9 foot wall
- The company processes hundreds of invoices per day
- Each invoice consists of multiple types of documents

The solution

- Utilizing FUJITSU Document Scanner fi-7160 Deluxe Bundle scanner and software package, ARB was able to digitize every incoming invoice
- The invoices are easily searched and pulled up at a moments notice

To most people in the four-wheel drive (4WD) community, ARB is a familiar name. Based in Australia, the company has long been a leading manufacturer and distributor of 4x4 accessories. "We manufacture and distribute many types of accessories for the four-wheel drive industry including bumpers, suspension systems and LED lighting" says Jeff Blake, operations manager for ARB Air Locker, the company's US distributor in Renton, Washington.

A few months ago Blake realized he had a space problem. "We produce about 100 invoices a day and the associated paperwork that goes with each one," he says explaining that the average 2-page invoice can include various documents such as shipping instructions, packaging slips, receipts and emails. With the business growing rapidly, Blake watched as his boxes of invoices quickly covered a 20-foot long, 9-foot high wall. "The boxes were taking up about half our space so I went looking for a way to go paperless."

But Blake didn't want to just save space. He also wanted to improve the efficiency of his operation. Key to achieving that goal was a solution that would not only digitize his invoices and associated documents, but would also recognize each document and automatically file them in the appropriate customer file. He wanted a solution that would scan invoice packets and automatically name the files, ideally by invoice date and number, by pulling information off each document. Once named, the documents would be sent to a shared file. If the customer was new to ARB, Blake wanted the system to automatically create a new customer file. His goal was a solution that would increase data accuracy while allowing ARB to quickly process documents without having to inspect them.

Blake began his research with calls to ARB's Australian office and quickly learned that most scanners still require a large amount of manual labor to solve his problem. Next, he searched online. Eventually he ended up at Fujitsu. "I talked to the marketing department and asked them a bunch of questions," he recalls. He asked if they offered a solution that would scan invoices and other documents directly into a folder and if it could scan more than one invoice at a time. He asked about the ability to control document storage resolution so he could minimize his hard drive storage requirements and if Fujitsu had a solution that would fit on a desktop. "They said yes to every question I asked and it turns out the system does exactly what they said it would do."

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The benefit
• Reduction in paper files and storage space
• Improved file naming capabilities
• Improved search abilities
• Faster response to customers

Products and services
• FUJITSU Document Scanner fi-7160 Deluxe Bundle
• PaperStream Capture Pro front-end capture software

Blake ended up with a solution that includes the FUJITSU Document Scanner fi-7160 bundled with Fujitsu's new PaperStream Capture Pro software. With duplex scanning speeds up to 120 images per minute at 300 dpi and advanced paper handling technology, the fi-7160 offered Blake an incredibly high performance and highly reliable document scanner.

But the real differentiator came with the PaperStream Capture Pro software. The new front-end document capture software builds on the fi-7160 capabilities by adding options for high level data extraction and indexing, as well as the import of electronic images and support for multi-station licensing. It also includes tools such as PaperStream IP that enhance and optimize images and help organizations such as ARB easily convert paper documents into digital files. Ultimately, these capabilities help Fujitsu customers improve their records management process and drive down document management costs.

"For me, the best part of it is the software's ability to scan an invoice and, if it is the first time we've scanned in anything for that particular customer, it creates a folder and then will automatically put the invoice in that folder," says Blake. "So it saves me a lot of time because I don't have to create an individual file and transfer documents into a different folder."

In fact, the new system saves time for departments well beyond accounts receivable. "One of the biggest issues for us is the sales and marketing people are constantly looking for invoices," notes Blake. Before the new system was installed if someone asked for a copy of an invoice, a sales person would have to dig through boxes to find the original. "Customers often call in and say, 'hey I got charged for this' or 'when is that item shipping' and 'what's my tracking number.' So now we've made that network drive available to everyone within the company. Instead of putting the customer on hold while they dig through a box, all they do is go online, click on the customer's folder, click on the date, and the invoice, tracking number and all the documents are right there."

Key to that advantage is that the naming rules in PaperStream Capture Pro allows the user to create a folder and file structure that can be easily searched using common Windows methods. "The software is set up to do two things," says Blake. "It will ask you where the destination folder is, where you want it and how you want to name it. It will use that meta data to name your file and save the file name. So it scans one part for the customer number and it looks to see if the file is there. If it's not, it creates a new folder. The second part of that is we save the file by the first three letters of the customer number, invoice and date." Rather than

use zonal OCR, Fujitsu recommended that Blake modify his invoice template to include a barcode for the account number as well as the invoice number it already had. So it makes the file with the customer number, invoice and date and that makes it easy to search using those criteria.

That means if a customer calls and they need a specific invoice, we can search through the Windows box search right away," explains Blake. "If the customer can't remember the number, we can just double click on the customer folder and browse for the invoice."

The time ARB is saving could eventually extend all the way to Australia. "One of the things we hope to eventually do is have a shared drive with our Australian counterparts because we deal with them every single day," says Blake. "Once we scan in our intercompany memos, management meeting notes and emails and put them on a shared drive, we won't have to constantly call or email each other to track down information."

The software setup process was very intuitive says Blake. "It was very easy and straightforward to create an invoice or scan project," he says. "There were a couple of settings I didn't know about, but I just called Fujitsu and they were very helpful." How simple was it? In their first day of operation, Blake's assistant scanned over 2,000 multi-page packets.

Blake has also found the test feature highly attractive. "After you're done making your templates and you want to see if it works, you can hit the test button and the system runs your tests for you," he explains. "So instead of doing the scan and putting it in a folder, like you normally would, you can just test it, and see if it works as opposed to running it and then saving it."

Thanks to the capabilities of the PaperStream Capture Pro software, the quality of the scans has been excellent. "There have only been a couple of times when it would scan too fast and the scan would be a little blurry," he says. "But you can click on the scan and it will review it and fix it automatically. That's really nice."

In the meantime, the ability to share data instantly is changing the way the company is operating. "Sales people can now access data from the field over the phone," says Blake. "When they visit a customer they can now go on their phone and see what the customer bought recently so they have knowledge as they walk in the door. So it's a great sales tool as well."

In collaboration with

ARB 4X4 ACCESSORIES

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