

Business Needs

One of CSS's core businesses is conducting elections for professional societies. This includes scanning paper ballots and providing an online voting option. Quality control measures require that each ballot be imprinted with a unique identification number as it is scanned so that election officials can match tallies of scanned ballots against manual tallies - the identification number identifies the ballot, but not the voter, to retain each voter's privacy. While CSS has been a reseller of Cardiff's TeleForm form processing software for nearly two decades and uses it for scanning surveys and other paper-based forms, CSS has had to rely on Scantron Optical Mark Reader (OMR) hardware for scanning paper ballots due to this imprinting requirement.

Karen Zilora, President of Creative Scanning Solutions, says the Scantron OMR product was problematic for CSS operations. "OMR forms are very expensive to print," she says. "The ballots have to be in two colors, with one color being an 'ink read' safe color, and there is very little tolerance in the printing specifications. We've had great difficulty when print shops have not been exact. Also, OMR bubbles have to be completely filled using only blue or black ink or pencil, so we have to visually inspect (and often fix) each OMR ballot."

She adds that Scantron OMR scanners are expensive to maintain, with CSS paying more than \$1,000 per scanner annually for its maintenance contract. "We could no longer justify that cost since we had already migrated all other scanning work off the OMR scanner," she says, adding that there were other problems as well, such as the difficulty in acquiring compatible ink cartridges.

Solution

Fujitsu Workgroup Scanner Hardware

CSS solved its problem by purchasing Fujitsu workgroup scanners, which are capable of scanning up to 40 pages and 80 images a minute in monochrome, or 30 pages and 60 images a minute in color, and have the capability of imprinting the

unique ballot serial number during the scanning process. While the identification number is actually printed after each ballot is scanned, Fujitsu software inserts the identification number into the scanned image so that the TeleForm software can read it.

"With the Fujitsu workgroup scanner, we can scan 2,400 ballots an hour," Zilora says. "Recently we used the Fujitsu scanners for an international professional society that has more than 40,000 members in 93 countries, and it performed flawlessly. The Fujitsu scanner is about one-fourth the size of the old Scantron scanner, so it saves space, and it has a USB connection, which means we can easily swap out the computer that is attached to it."

Benefits

Lower Costs, Significant Labor Savings

By switching to Fujitsu scanners for its paper balloting service, CSS saves both time and money. Zilora states that the company has saved about 41 percent on printing costs. CSS is able to scan ballots in about half the time that it used to take using the older Scantron equipment. It has also cut labor costs by about 90 percent because the cumbersome, manual inspection of the older Scantron OMR ballots has been eliminated.

"For our labor savings, we estimated that on one project alone we saved about 15 hours of our employees' time because we no longer had to do manual reviews for quality control," says Zilora. "And we're scanning ballots in half the time because we no longer have the frequent stops due to read errors, paper jams, and feeder failures."

Creative Scanning Solutions, Inc. benefit snapshot:

- 41 percent savings on printing costs
- About 90 percent of manual labor required for manual quality checks has been eliminated
- Scans of ballots done twice as fast due to greater accuracy and solid performance of Fujitsu scanners

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