Document Imaging Report
Business Trends on Converting Paper Processes to Electronic Format

A Thin Scanning Update from TWAIN

Thin scanning with TWAIN Direct allows scanning to be implemented in minutes and saves IT time by providing a driverless way to manage scanners. We spoke with Kevin Neal, long-time industry insider and Marketing Chair for the TWAIN Working Group. (at least when he's not making mechanical wooden models.

Give us a quick explanation of thin computing for anyone reading about it for the first time and then why it's useful.

Neal: Thin scanning is about no software installation. Some readers may recall Salesforce's original marketing, which had a big logo of software with a big red X through it. You can now deploy scanning without any software installation – everything is Web-based.

As for why anyone should care, thin computing saves time because you don't have to install software. It saves costs on IT burden. You don't have to have a PC and operating system. You don't have to have antivirus software. Plus, you don't have the maintenance time and cost of managing those things. Because the scanner is thin and it can connect to a thin client, you can have, literally, five-minute scanner deployments. With fully functional workflows running in 10 minutes, you get much better time to value.

As you were answering, I began to wonder if "thin" is a useful word for gaining broader recognition for this technology?

Neal: I think so. With the popularity of thin computers like Chromebooks, it's not an unknown concept for even smaller companies. For instance, many doctors' offices have thin computers – they don't install software on them. The whole idea is that everything's working through a Web browser for security purposes. It's also better to maintain a network if you're not having to install local software.

You don't store anything locally; it's all on a centralized server. The concept of browser-based scanning is simple to explain in that context.

Eighteen months or so ago you threw out an estimate of a billion or so dollars in lost IT productivity from just managing drivers to get them to work like they should. As IT times becomes more valuable with the IT shortage, is that a trend TWAIN Direct can leverage for more visibility?

Neal: We're conducting surveys about that. [Note: We're helping, see the sidebar to take the survey.] There is some data that supports that argument. Companies usually just take an axe to the IT budget and don't consider these hidden productivity drags. They aren't looking at how much time is spent on fixing scanner issues or installing, updating new operating systems. Companies aren't looking at those intangible costs.

With the survey, we hope to surface these issues so that organizations can have a real view of true hard costs and soft costs. There's a lot of education to be done.

Like we were talking about before I hit record, I'm thinking of how I spent two hours last week trying to identify a PDF issue. Just spinning that out to a larger company, it seems obvious (to me) that as IT staff become harder to find, the "small stuff" is going to be missed and start going to impact the customer – and even employee – experience.

Neal: Exactly. We've talked about the IT burden, but this affects knowledge workers too. Think about the extra clicks to scan and store to a folder in Salesforce (for example). When you start to add up those extra clicks and extra minutes, there's a real lost labor cost/lost efficiency.

If you can just scan directly into your Salesforce with one click that's saving a couple minutes per transaction. We know this, it just becomes a math problem. We just want to try to quantify it, which is one of the purposes of our survey – how much time are people spending each day on these hidden productivity lags.

New Research About IT Shortages

As hiring freezes and layoffs hit, technology teams are struggling to do more with less. Intelligent automation initiatives are going to be harder, if not impossible, to pull off. Recent research shows this tension: "More than two-thirds (67%) of technology leaders surveyed by Pluralsight agreed that hiring freezes and layoffs across IT, software and data teams had resulted in their teams taking on more responsibility. Despite this, 85% of respondents to Pluralsight's survey said their organization was either actively engaged in, or planning, a digital transformation project in 2023." Read the State of Upskilling here.

Let's talk quickly about adoption, anything particularly fun or cool or interesting going on?

Neal: We're seeing interest in the traditional areas such as accounting, which are really starting to move to the cloud. We're also seeing a lot of interest in healthcare and traditional document management – what new kinds of capture front-ends using thin client Web-based technology instead of local installations. We're also starting to see interest in government applications where there's a high security need.

How can someone get involved – either using or participating in the technology's development?

Neal: I would definitely encourage to join the TWAIN Working Group. It's simple and easy to join – just go to https://twain.org. You can participate in weekly meetings. We help our members publicize their applications. We'll also work with folks on trial memberships.

If you're doing anything related to scanning or capture or imaging, you definitely want to be a member and you want to be able to get access to all the great resources that we have.

> ### AIIM Florida Chapter Webinar with Kevin Neal
> Join the Kevin next week for "Digital Transformation made easy with Thin Scanning Solutions."
>
> Wednesday, April 19 at 1pm EDT
>
> AIIM's Florida Chapter is hosting this webinar. Registration is free. Kevin will speak in more detail about thin scanning.
>
> Register here.

This might be a premature question, but have you begun to identify next steps in the technology?

Neal: We're really focused on getting the basic word out. We've validated that people can make money with this technology. Also that deploying scanners in five minutes is possible. This has been a little bit of a Holy Grail in the industry for a while, now that we have it, we need to let people know it exists!

People still have to see it to believe it. So we're really trying to simplify things – it's an API and all you need is an Internet connection. No patches or updates and since it doesn't rely on any kind of particular operating system you can run in Citrix virtualized environments.

So again, we are focused on education right now. I know that in another 18 months, we'll have many amazing stories of thin scanning integrations. It's a very exciting time.

About the Document Imaging Report

DIR is the leading executive report on managing documents for e-business. Areas we cover include: Document Capture; OCR/ICR, AI, and Machine Learning; RPA; ECM; Records Management; Document Output; and BPM.

DIR brings you the inside story behind the deals and decisions that affect your business.

Managing Editor: Ralph Gammon; rg@info-source.com

Editor-in-Chief: Bryant Duhon; bdu@info-source.com and +1 (301) 275-7496

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