

Artsyl Success Story: SimpleCapture

SimpleCapture Speeds Goods Across the Border

Every day, our client, a leading Canadian logistics service provider, faces the ultimate invoice processing challenge.*

Most companies merely process invoices from their own vendors. But our client must also process the huge volume of invoices its clients receive – many with their own unique format. The company's clients are often manufacturers who rely on the smooth flow of supplies to keep their factories running at peak efficiency. Our client shepherds these critical documents through the complex and arcane international regulatory environment to ensure that their customer's factories receive their goods on time and without incurring fines.

Client invoices contain data about the goods being transported and our client must quickly and accurately extract data from each of them to feed their information systems. Our client chose SimpleCapture document capture software from Artsyl Technologies for this mission-critical job. SimpleCapture reduced the time and cost required to process thousands of client invoices per month. "The software has done everything we were told it would do," says Vice President of Finance John P.

Once the data is extracted, Our client then must proceed to the next step in processing the transaction. These rules and regulations are extremely complex and vary with the type of goods being transported. Failure to comply with regulations can delay or prevent shipment of the goods and may attract fines. SimpleCapture helps ensure that the data is captured so our client can focus on the correct processing of the data.

John P says SimpleCapture collects and automatically imports scanned invoices from two sources: the company's fax server, which receives faxes sent primarily by truck drivers transporting freight for clients, or from carriers who scan and transmit the documents via computer network.

The user associates each source with a document profile or profiles. Each profile describes the type of document and the processing choices associated with it. The product ships with default profiles for commonly imaged documents such as invoices or bills of lading. But custom profiles may also be created and our client created its own profile scripted in XML. SimpleCapture v2.0 features a profile editor which gives users the option of creating or editing profiles without scripting.

Three issues delayed the firm's adoption of an automated solution: a huge number of invoice formats, inconsistent image quality and concerns about training and acceptance by employees.

Too Many Invoice Variations

Most invoice capture applications require templates which tell the software where to find the data. However, John P. says that his company receives so many different invoice formats, a template-based capture product wouldn't be feasible. "We would have had to create a template for each invoice design and new templates would have to be added often. It would have been too time consuming and expensive," he says.

The company also investigated even more expensive alternatives which claimed to automatically find the correct data on any invoice without templates. But John P. says this option still requires extensive customization and months of testing and

Client

* The customer did not want to reveal its name or industry for proprietary reasons. However, the customer will provide a reference by telephone if requested.

Product:

Artsyl SimpleCapture

troubleshooting. Even at their best, he says their error rate wouldn't justify the high cost of purchase, professional services and training – or the lengthy disruption of their processes and high potential for employee frustration.

On the other hand, John P. says SimpleCapture's "Click-to-Capture" interface has been accurate and quickly accepted by employees. SimpleCapture was designed with invoices and other variable forms in mind. It presents the operator with each document image and the operator simply clicks on each snippet of required information – regardless of its location. SimpleCapture recognizes the data and immediately presents the results beside the document image. "SimpleCapture was easy to set up and use and it was far less expensive than the alternatives we evaluated," says John.

Poor Image Quality

Even under the best circumstances, extracting data from faxes is much more difficult than when a document is captured by a document scanner operated by a specialist. And these aren't the best circumstances. Truck drivers fax the documents and they can be wrinkled and dirty. At best, John says image quality has been inconsistent. SimpleCapture's image cleanup features reduce recognition errors and its efficient user interface has made it quick and easy to correct recognition errors caused by poor quality documents.

Training and Acceptance

John P. was concerned employees would object to learning new software and that it would be expensive and time consuming to train them. Production document capture software can require several days of training and sophisticated technical skills. "They have been comfortable with SimpleCapture," he says. Even worse than the lost time and required skills, the vendor frequently charges thousands of dollars for the training and travel expenses are the customer's responsibility. Our client staff has been able to use SimpleCapture within minutes.

Knowledgeable service and support are also important and our client has found these with Artsyl business partner Connectis Group. The Toronto-based firm helped Link + evaluate SimpleCapture by setting up demonstrations using the company's own documents. When Link + selected SimpleCapture, Connectis worked with the customs agent's information technology staff to install, configure and test the solution.

Integration with Custom Back End

Our client has been developing its own data processing software, since the early 1990s. It was important that their invoice processing software could be easily integrated with this system. SimpleCapture's flexible, modern, .Net® architecture and variety of export options fit their needs. This made it feasible to programmatically integrate SimpleCapture and our client's software. The applications now work together to automatically place invoice data directly into the client's database in the appropriate format and location.

The client's software translates the data it receives from SimpleCapture into useable form.

Thanks in part to SimpleCapture, our client can process a transaction in as little as two hours.

Next Steps

When this was written, SimpleCapture had been in production at our client for several months but not all of the company had been converted from manual capture, in part because the company was also changing its workflow tools and processes. John P. says the company didn't want to introduce too many changes too quickly for employees. When the company completes the transition, they will process thousands of invoices per month.

For more information, visit www.artsyltech.com.