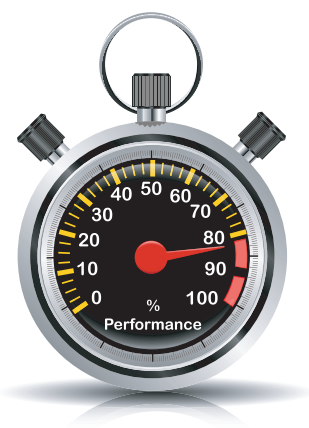




# The Paper-Free Process Revolution Handbook

Automating your manual (and paper-centric) processes will revolutionize your business—making it faster, flexible, and more responsive




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## Introduction

Let's get this straight from the beginning; using less paper isn't just about "going green" or saving the rain forest. Using less paper in your business processes will revolutionize your business—making it faster, flexible, and more responsive to the needs of your customers.

At least since the Sumerians wrote down transactions on baked clay tablets, documents have been the foundation of business. And while we no longer need to lug around those heavy clay documents (and watch out for water); if you're using paper to manage your business then you aren't any more efficient—or faster—than a civilization that existed 4,000 years ago.

-  It doesn't have to be this way.
-  The technology is available.
-  More importantly, the technology works.

We have been scanning documents and moving them around business electronically for over 25 years; and that's a good start. But, to match the pace of business today; content must be mobilized and harnessed for business use as soon as possible. Advances in scanning speeds, declining prices, and imaging and recognition software have combined to dramatically improve the concept of the digital mailroom—converting those inbound paper documents to digital format to directly feed business process; accounts payable for instance. As effective at the digital mailroom is—and will continue to be—at moving pieces of paper to the digital world (enabling those documents to be used at the speed of business with email, the Web, social channels, and your internal processes); it's not a true revolution. Capture isn't just about paper documents any longer.

A step beyond—business documents don't ever need to touch paper. Take another step and you're going to revolutionize your business even further using mobile and cloud technologies to capture your documents and data. The challenge is to capture content closer to the point of origination, routing it into the process, monitoring it once there, and making it available to whoever needs it, wherever they are, and in the shortest possible time.



## Paper Creates Organizational Sclerosis

Paper-based content clogs up processes—masking workflows, adding physical delays, and limiting flexibility of where and how the process takes place. The fact that organizations use scanning systems does not necessarily mean they are adopting paper-free processes. In AIIM's [The Paper Free Office - dream or reality](#), we found that inbound documents are nearly as likely to be scanned for archive after the process as they are to be scanned immediately before the process or on entry to the building. We know companies who have literally not had to build extra office space, or lease additional buildings (yes, BUILDINGS), because they imaged their business documents. The traditional benefits of capture are serious: faster access to your content, space savings, broad access to all information, etc. But, today, that's just baseline productivity. It's ringtones.

Paper persists for many reasons. And there is some truth in the fact that it has some advantages as a document handling and document storage medium. [You know, like what happens if the scenario from the new TV show *Revolution* happens and ALL of the power goes out?] However, compatibility with electronic transaction processes is certainly not an advantage, and neither is universality of access for employees throughout the business.

Paper won't go away on its own. Without management initiatives and mandates, users are likely to hold on to the familiar. They will, of course, raise a number of objections to a paper-free process redesign, as with any business change project. [for a hilarious take on how you or your staff could react; watch this video <http://www.paperbecause.com/media/ration> ] The most superficially "justifiable" reasons are often related to the need for a physical (wet) signature on a document and associated auditability.

As we might expect, larger organizations are more likely to have implemented at least a few scanning and capture projects, but 22% have yet to adopt ANY paper-free processes. This rises in small and mid-sized companies to 33%. As a policy objective, only 20% of organizations of any size actively scrutinize every process with a view to driving out paper. Let's hope these are your competitors and not you.

## It's Time to Change





*Your customer doesn't care why it takes your business longer to respond to a paper application than a Web form, nor why the help desk can't see the letter they mailed two days ago.*

AIIM research shows how revolutionary moving from paper to electronic processes can be. This is a revolution because the productivity gains and the speed of response improvements can be dramatic—30% to 50% process productivity gains and 3 to 10 times reduction in turnaround times. These opportunities are being driven largely by customer expectations. Your customer doesn't care why it takes your business longer to respond to a paper application than a Web form, nor why the help desk can't see the letter they mailed two days ago, but they will be impressed by a claims agent or loan provider who can confirm approval face-to-face, and capture the signed application forms there and then, or the health worker who can access their records at the bedside and have them consent to the treatment one-time only, with a single on-screen signature. Or let's put it this way; how patient are you with companies you do business with as you fill out paperwork? Now, how do you think your customers feel about you?

Technology is at the heart of this revolution. Digital mailrooms and sophisticated data capture move paper onto PCs before it gets into the building—and those PCs can be local, head-office, outsourced or off-shored. Once data is in electronic form it can easily be moved again onto smartphones or tablets, and with the right connectivity, the process itself can be driven or monitored from wherever the originator might be—and that might include the customer in some cases, or certainly the supplier or project partner.

AIIM research shows an overwhelming desire to "have a better insight into how our current business processes are performing," which of course plays to the fact that converting paper documents to electronic as early as possible in process makes it easier to monitor the process. "As might be expected, improving efficiency is very much to the fore in the current economic climate, along with optimization of business processes." This is no small task and requires not only the proper use of technology but also changing the processes we use. This revolution is not simply a matter of discarding paper; we must take charge of our processes and re-invent them to be more effective.

Why remove paper from your organization's processes? Some of the benefits that can be realized by taking on this task include:

-  Reduce the amount of time it takes to respond to your customers
-  Improve the ability to search and share documents
-  Make documents and information accessible for all staff; wherever they are
-  Space and cost savings





The technology is here but is your organizational culture ready for it?

# The Business Case: But I Love My Paper

Let's go into more detail about the value of automating your business processes.

Paper is a space hog and a time suck. Filing cabinets not only take up space, they pose a challenge in delivering the right information to the right people at the right time. Studies by PricewaterhouseCoopers indicate that on average, 7.5% of all documents are lost and that 3.5% of the remaining documents will be misfiled. In short, you will not find 11% or more of your paper-based information. Imagine if you have warehouses full of paper and the total is near 50 million documents. If you lose 7.5% completely, that is 3.75 million lost documents. If you consider that of the remaining 46.25 million documents 3.5% or an estimated 16 million documents will not be where they are supposed to be. The cost in finding your information is staggering. Electronic content and records are not only less likely to be lost or misplaced, they can be retrieved in seconds and accessed simultaneously which, in turn, lowers your operating costs and significantly increases your operational efficiencies.

And, a few data points from AIIM research to hammer home the value of improved business processes:

-  28% feel constrained by their ECM/workflow system when it comes to making process changes, and for 15% it has limited their ability to achieve an enterprise-wide solution. 60% feel that their industry-specific requirements may restrain their ability to use SaaS or Cloud solutions.
-  70% consider that the use of scanning and capture improves the speed of responses to customers, suppliers, citizens or staff by three-times or more. Nearly 30% put the factor at ten times or more.
-  Considering only those who have already deployed data capture for a number of their key processes (85 respondents), the estimated improvement goes up, with 59% reporting a third or more improvement and the average rising to 44% improvement. This is a very positive indicator of project success, with expectations generally being exceeded.
-  Re-designing processes to be paper-free can improve productivity by a third and response to customers by a factor of three.

## What Revolution?

Despite the acknowledged benefits, a third of small and mid-sized companies and 22% of the largest have yet to adopt any paper-free processes. Over half report that 10% or less of the processes that could be paper-free has so far been addressed. Only 20% of organizations surveyed actively evaluate all processes for driving out paper.

### There's room for improvement.

Mobile devices—smart phones and tablets – have tremendous potential for bringing business processes to everywhere and everyone in the organization. Again, AIIM research reinforces the potential of bringing business processes to mobile devices; but, the revolution is just starting.

67% of respondents consider mobile technologies to be important or extremely important to improving their business processes. 31% consider tablets to be more important than smartphones, with 24% seeing smartphones as more important.



Email has been the killer app to bring these devices into business. But, it's time to think beyond the inbox to open up new realms of extended business processes—or even completely new ways to do things. The majority of our respondents recognize this increasing importance of mobile technologies, with 48% considering it to be “important” and 19% “extremely important”—67% overall. For the largest organizations, this rises to 75%.



Despite acknowledging the importance of mobile technologies, action is lacking. AIIM found that 76% of organizations have no mobile-enabled business processes, including 24% who have not even thought about it. A further 20% have overriding security reasons, or feel it adds no value, but 32% have evaluated mobile for some of their business processes, but have not made a move. There is a differentiation in levels for mobile-enabled systems. First is the ability to access or reference the system from a mobile device, next is being able to capture forms, supporting documents, signatures, etc. and to feed them back to the process, and finally the ability to access and transact the process from a mobile device.



45% of respondents suggest a 33% or more improvement in productivity if field-based or travelling staff were able to connect to back-office processes. The average assessment was a 36% improvement in productivity.



45% of respondents consider that the speed of response to customers, suppliers, citizens or staff would be improved by three-times or more by the use of mobile information access, process interaction and local capture.

But, change is slowly happening. Across a range of processes, 5% of organizations are able to drive their back-office applications from mobile devices, plus another 5% who are capturing input through mobile.

Only 20% of organizations surveyed actively evaluate all processes for driving out paper. It is so easy to fall back into bad habits. To avoid this, organizations should continually audit and evaluate their processes to make sure they remain paper free.

## Getting Started Checklist

While we can't cover everything you need to get your processes ramped up; the following checklist will get you thinking—and then moving—in the right direction.

### ***You need to be able to read what you capture.***

Because you will need to capture paper; you need to make sure you do it right. Follow these steps to ensure image quality and legibility.



Unbind documents. Save the binding materials if it is necessary for assembly later.



Carefully unfold and smooth out paper documents.



Remove staples, paper clips, and other fasteners and tape torn documents, using non-yellowing matt-finish tape.



Identify illegible documents or those that meet preparation criteria of illegible documents and remove them for separate processing using special scanning techniques.



Align all pages to the same orientation so that the top of every page faces the same way and the front of every page faces the same way.



Sort documents into batches (i.e., size, color, date, document type, etc.)

*Source: Adapted from ANSI/AIIM TR17, Planning Considerations Addressing Preparation of Documents for Image Capture*

*We know companies who have literally not had to build extra office space, or lease additional buildings (yes, BUILDINGS), because they imaged their business documents.*

### ***We are the champions.***

As with any project or major improvement in an organization, it is important to have a champion in the executive leadership team. Lack of management initiatives or mandates is the most likely reason for the prevalence of paper in so many business processes. Staff are also to blame, preferring to handle and file paper—feeling it's more reliable—and also driven by the perceived need to physically sign signatures.

### ***Start scanning to process.***

Scan-to-archive is still much more prevalent than scan-to-process. Only half of those organizations who capture text and data from scanned forms and documents actually link it into the process, as opposed to using it for routing through the process or indexing for archive.

### ***Digital Mailroom: Don't let paper into the building.***

The best way to remove paper from business processes is to head it off before it gets into the building. A digital mailroom—in-house or outsourced—transforms incoming mail into electronic format and routes it automatically to the correct process department. At the same time, recognition software can capture data from the form and link it to the enterprise processing system. Communications from customers, citizens, suppliers, and partners can arrive at the business through other channels—email, fax, Web, or social. This needs to be fed in a uniform way through the capture system and then routed to the appropriate process alongside the scanned paper documents. Capturing content before it gets into the building makes it immediately accessible, kicks off the process early, minimizes hand data-entry, and provides complete flexibility for who does the processing, and where. And if we can directly capture data via Web forms, or with mobile devices, we can finally eliminate the paper form completely.

### ***Put electronic content, not paper, in your processes.***

Find a relatively risk-free internal process, and go digital from start to finish. Aside from the costs of paper, toner, and other elements related to paper documents, the process and cost of moving it through an organization can be considerable, not to mention the amount of time wasted for action to be taken. Think about a review process where the options are to move a single copy in serial fashion through the process from person to person or produce multiple copies for a parallel review followed by a compilation of edits and another review cycle that follows. Using a collaborative workspace, perhaps something like SharePoint, allows reviewers to access the document 24/7 from anywhere in the world incorporating their comments and revisions that are recorded as updated versions—with the result being a finished product. All without paper.

### ***Implement digital signatures.***

When a signature is required, match the signature solution to the signature requirements. While “click-wrap” is the easiest and most common, there are numerous options. Electronic signature tablets similar to those used in retail are one option; you can even get them sophisticated enough to capture the unique biometric characteristics of each individual for future comparison if the signature is questioned.

You need a signature on a contract and in the physical world that means a wet ink signature with the additional caveat that in some cases it be with blue ink. The idea being that the blue ink is a visible form of authentication that the signature is real and authentic, not a copy. Even with the blue ink signature, how can you be sure the document itself was not changed after it was signed? The use of digital signatures incorporating cryptographic technologies provides a means to ensure the integrity and authenticity of a signed document. If you need to have an actual signature, electronic signature tablets like those found in the retail industry, using this same cryptographic technology combined with the ability to capture biometric characteristics like pen pressure, acceleration, and deceleration, are a good choice. If you've just been doing internal signatures just because you've always done internal wet signatures; rethink and ensure you actually need to do so—you might not. Besides, there's an app for that, so you can definitely make it easier.

*The proliferation of cameras on all these mobile devices offers us an ability to change the scanning paradigm. If everyone has a phone, why do we have to provide large amounts of scanners?*

### ***Don't automate a bad process.***

Before you attempt to automate your process you should look for ways to improve it. Technology for the sake of technology does not work and automating an inherently bad process will not improve it; in fact it may enhance the problem.

This is where you want to look for bottlenecks and redundant steps. Assess if the steps are needed and is the sequence of these steps required or can you break these into parallel activities that then reconnect and continue on to the next phase of your process. By breaking a serial process into parallel steps, you can significantly streamline the process and decrease the overall time it takes to complete.

### ***Focus on mobile.***

While we can't ignore the control factor, we need to respond aggressively to the opportunities afforded by mobile. Mobile needs to be a part of every IT decision, not an afterthought. You must invest in the required technical skills, which are different from traditional IT skills that are needed to take advantage of mobile. Set your focus on where your customers will be three years from now in terms of mobile, and figure out how your IT strategies and systems will meet them when they get there.

The ability to consume content through a tablet and reducing convenience printing is nice. Tablets and smart phones can change everything—you can really enable processes to be completed when people aren't at their desk. This isn't working at night, but working when you are at an off-site conference, or your bus is stuck in traffic. The proliferation of cameras on all these mobile devices offers us an ability to change the scanning paradigm. If everyone has a phone, why do we have to provide large amounts of scanners? Yes, there is potentially better quality and OCR technologies are better integrated at this point, but you don't need either for receipts. Sometimes, the image serves as evidence and these things aren't needed. Take expenses; all you need for proof is the receipt. They are likely only reviewed randomly, when the totals look wrong, or if an employee develops a reputation for errors. Mobile capture allows processes to not get stuck while someone looks for a scanner, which is likely back at the office. It is very practical as well since it enables periodic process participants to capture documents without having to provide them equipment.










*This revolution is not simply a matter of discarding paper; we must take charge of our processes and re-invent them to be more effective.*

## **Socialize**




Start the conversation on the role social media tools play in your business processes. Will you use online chat as part of customer service? How will you communicate with you customers with Twitter, Facebook, etc.? Online collaboration has been around, but the tools haven't been widely spread until recently. The spread of all these Social Media tools makes the ability for people to collaborate digitally outside of email (a widely misused communication tool). If these tools are implemented as part of the processes, these collaborative interactions can be captured as part of the history, providing more context process. Not everything is a defined process. There are common approaches, but many things vary from activity to activity. Social Media tools can help collect and document these processes. From there, some standard processes can be defined but not always. The real key is to get the knowledge worker collaborating in the organizations systems and not doing everything on their laptop or around the water cooler.

## **Quick Tips**

Here is a list of shorter ideas and general things you can do to begin the process of evaluating and revising your processes. Let's get started!

-  Audit your processes to see where paper shows throughput, adds process steps, or restricts transparency and reporting.
-  In particular, examine your customer (or supplier or staff) response mechanisms to see if physical mailings or paper processing are slowing things down, restricting visibility, or paralleling electronic communications paths.
-  Look at how physical handling of incoming mail site-by-site might better be centralized, processed in higher volume and distributed electronically.
-  If you are already using scanning, consider how much "closer to the door" you could be going electronic, and how that might transform who does the subsequent processing and where they might be located.
-  Aim to scan documents or capture data as close to the source as possible—in the branch office, on the shop floor, in the field or at the customer's premises.
-  Brainstorm how the capabilities of modern mobile devices—portable scanners, smartphones, tablets and specialist devices—could transform your processes by eliminating elapsed time, lost forms, poor data, and rekeying.
-  Do not print or copy any documents unless absolutely required. Process your documents electronically by sending all documents via email or electronic fax as the preferred method to your customers.
-  Use Web 2.0 technologies like wikis and blogs for internal communication and collaboration
-  Map, design and manage all business processes electronically. You can begin by mapping the processes and assessing how they can be improved as they are, then address process automation using what you currently own and/or may purchase. Look at where and why paper is still leaking into the business.



-  Paper is widely used between business-to-customer, business-to-business, government-to-business, and customer-to-business for day-to-day transaction purposes. Government and corporate has to frame policy and implement paper less processes. Elevate, educate, and provide hands-on support to the non IT savvy customers to use self-service applications.
-  Put electronic content, not paper, in your processes and use collaborative workspaces.
-  Implement scanning into processes which will deliver clear benefits.

## Resources to take a deeper dive

*To find out how your organization is doing in relation to others:*

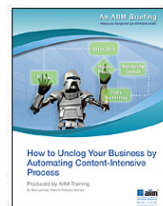


[The Paper Free Office – dream or reality?](#)



[Process Revolution - moving your business from paper to pc's to tablets](#)

*To take a deeper dive:*



[Unclog Your Business by Automating Content-Intensive Process \(How to\)](#)

*To learn from others:*



[5 Myths about Document Automation and Electronic Forms](#)

## Ready to Join the Revolution?

Are you ready to revolutionize your business? AIIM training is an essential piece in providing you with the knowledge you need to make change happen—effectively—for your business. Our courses on Business Process Management (BPM) and Capture are what you need.

Capture—understanding of the tools and strategies needed to remove paper from your business—is half of the revolution. On average, respondents using scanning and capture consider that it improves the speed of response to customers, suppliers, citizens or staff by 6-times or more. 70% estimate an improvement of at least 3-times, and nearly a third (29%) see an improvement of 10-times or more.

And while removing paper and manual processes is a critical first step; automating your business processes completes the revolution in your business.

AIIM's BPM course will give you the know-how of how to take those formerly paper-based assets and insert them into your business processes. When you do that, you move at the speed of computers and no longer will rely on a piece of paper moving from desk to desk to desk (assuming it doesn't get lost) for your business processes.

## Ready?

## Education Around the Clock . . . Or In Person

Learn at your own pace and at your own convenience by taking the courses online. Available 24/7; learn as you have time. Classroom instruction—both public courses and private courses delivered to you—is also available.

**Eliminate Paper.  
Start Today.**

**Automate Your Processes.  
Start Today.**

Want us to contact you? Email us at [training@aiim.org](mailto:training@aiim.org)

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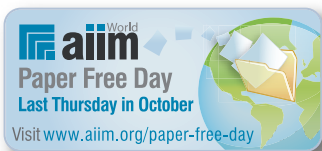
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Prior to coming to AIIM, Betsy held positions with DynSolutions, a Correspondence, Document and Records Management Company, and Westinghouse Electric. In both of these companies, she has implemented imaging, workflow and document management systems. In 1994, Betsy was awarded AIIM's Distinguished Service Citation and was inducted into AIIM's Company of Fellows in 2008. Betsy has a Masters in Library Science from the University of Pittsburgh and a Bachelor of Science in Education specializing in Library and Information Sciences from Clarion State University.



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## About World Paper-free Day



For years, we've heard of the promises of the paperless office. And while you may see the words "paper-free" and think "tree hugger," the reasons to participate are linked to hard business benefits, not saving trees. Join AIIM and organizations around the world for one day as we discuss how to automate manual processes (that's removing the paper) in order to make work run more smoothly. If you remove the inefficiency paper creates in your organization; you WILL save and/or make more money. And, yes, it is good for the environment. Those are two reasons anyone can support.

The final Thursday of October; commit to:

- Not printing anything
- Look into a business process or technology that can cut the paper waste in your office
- Participate or produce a local Paper-free Day

As information explodes exponentially, if your organization's processes remain mired in paper you will drown in paper.

[www.aiim.org/paper-free-day](http://www.aiim.org/paper-free-day)

## About AIIM

As the non-profit association dedicated to nurturing, growing and supporting the information management and social business community, AIIM is proud to provide this research at no charge. In this way, the entire community can leverage the education, thought leadership and direction provided by our work.

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