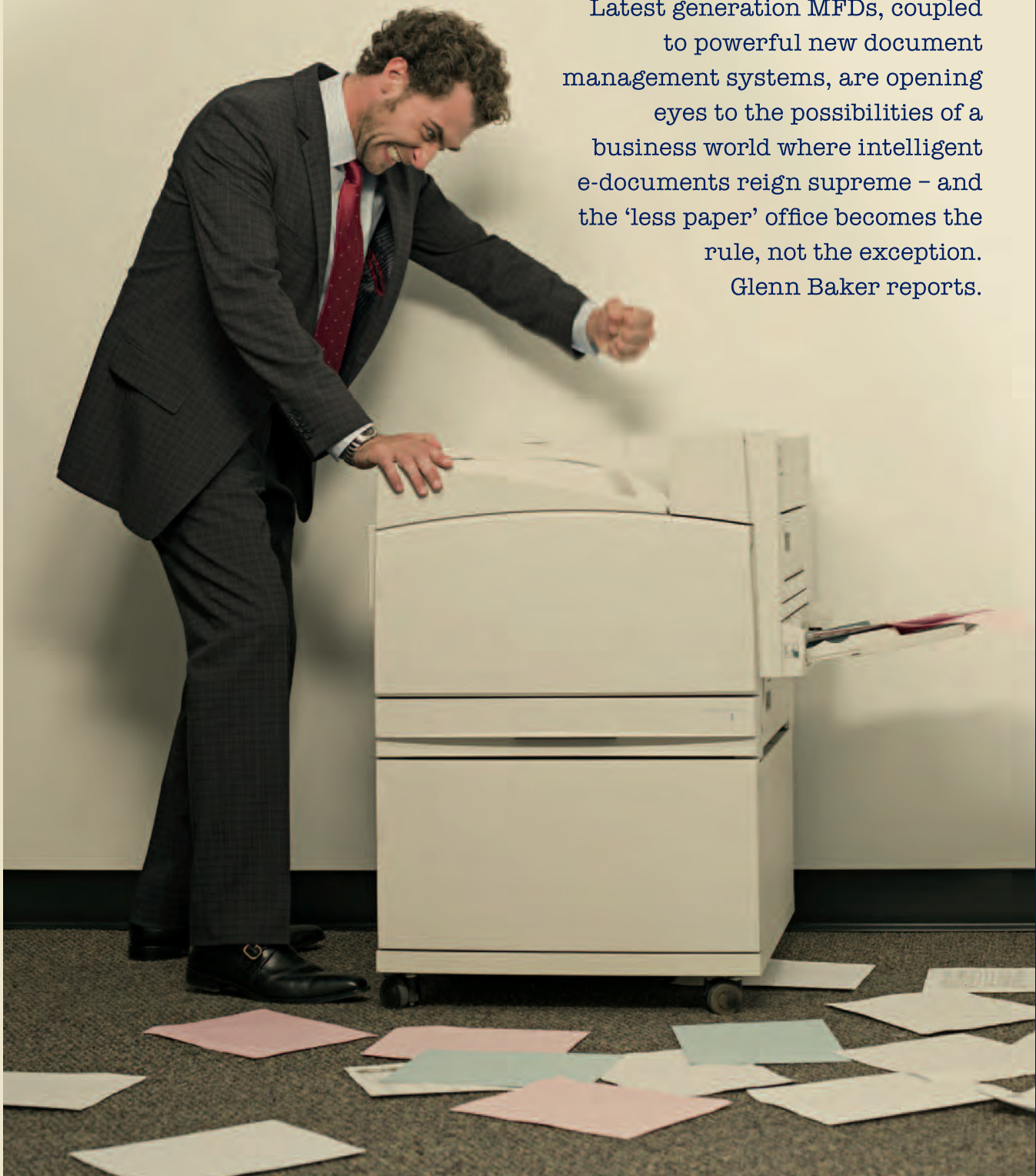




# LESS PAPER, *more efficiency*

Latest generation MFDs, coupled to powerful new document management systems, are opening eyes to the possibilities of a business world where intelligent e-documents reign supreme – and the ‘less paper’ office becomes the rule, not the exception. Glenn Baker reports.



**I**t seems our love affair with paper is far from over. In homes and businesses around the world, we're still spewing paper documents from printers and copiers. We can't help it – we're addicted. When we want to read a document, we click 'Print' – despite the proliferation of large screens and e-reader devices. When I finish this story, you can guarantee it'll emerge from my dusty old LaserJet.

Greg Twiname, channel manager software solutions for Konica Minolta, tells me that global paper usage is still growing by 17 to 20 percent per year – although it's slowing. He believes we'll have to move through a whole generation before we start to see our reliance on paper diminish. As for the 'paperless office' – it's purely a figment of some over-optimistic futurist's imagination. The most we can hope for is a 'less paper office' – and if you talk to any of the printer vendors, you'll discover that moves to deliver the 'less paper office' are well under way, thanks to exciting new 'smart' technologies.

We talked to some of the leading 'document solution' vendors about these latest smarts.

Richard Penny, market innovation manager at Fuji Xerox New Zealand speaks of optimising paper usage and speeding up workflows. "Simple scan-to-email and scan-to-mailbox functionality, standard on most modern MFDs (multifunctional devices) means organisations can use scanning as an alternative to copying and therefore utilise digital filing options such as local or network folders of a DMS (document management system).

"The digitising of paper documents essentially brings the document and the information it contains within the reach of powerful applications such as CRM, ERP and DMS. Once digitised, capability within these applications can be harnessed to help information flow around a business and streamline filing and retrieval."

On a simple level, says Penny, scanning and OCR (optical character recognition) means that documents required for fast retrieval can be digitised and stored within a DMS, with the search and retrieval

process sped up through the use of metadata [identifying key words] or even the text within the document itself. "Documents can also be accessed remotely using mobile phones and tablets."

Barcodes added to documents at output (printing) means that relevant information about the document (e.g. form type, the patient, date, etc) is stored on the document itself and can be read by SmartConnect (Fuji Xerox's locally developed 'integration toolkit' that links its ApeosPort MFDs with an organisation's software apps and solutions) when subsequently scanned.

"This means that with one touch, a document can be scanned, recognised and relevant workflows invoked," says Penny. "These workflows could be as simple as filing the now-completed form against a patient or customer record, or more complex flows such as sending notifications to individuals requesting authorisation – a request for leave perhaps."

Barcodes can also be utilised to enable batch-scanning of documents to further improve processing speed and create business efficiencies, he says. "Plus, another important benefit of the combination of the web interface on the ApeosPort MFD and SmartConnect is that workers can retrieve, print and process documents such as forms directly from the MFD, negating the need to log into a PC. This is useful in places such as hospitals, warehouses, etc where staff need quick access to forms or documents on demand."

### Less manual processing

The essence of all this new technology is, of course, to automate traditional manual document handling procedures which can create bottlenecks – plus, allow business processes to happen digitally within an organisation's IT network, with paper 'hard copy' output rarely required. This elevates the latest "point-of-entry" MFDs way beyond their previous status as devices that merely printed, copied, scanned and faxed. Scanning has almost become the key to their

functionality – whether scanning to email, to document storage, to archive, even scanning to USB stick.

It's what can be done on the MFD, once a document has been scanned, that makes these new generation devices and their software particularly exciting. Konica Minolta's Scanz document capture solution, for example, can improve the quality of the captured documents with automatic 'de-speckling', 'de-skewing' and line removal. It can create digital copies in numerous common file formats; unlock data from barcodes (as covered earlier); read special document marks and recognise data in specifically defined zones on the page; before linking directly to document management and line-of-business applications – everything from SharePoint to Google Docs. This is the sort of functionality typical of the latest generation MFDs and document management systems – and not wholly exclusive to any one vendor.

However, having highlighted one Konica Minolta product, it's also worth mentioning their Kofax forms processing solution (otherwise known as 'transformation modules'), which Greg Twiname says extends the OCR process with its ability to extract certain specified data off scanned documents. For example, it will search invoices for data elements like GST numbers and use the data for extraction and output. Businesses can extract and route both the document and the data from the document to downstream data repositories with no human intervention, he says.

"A major New Zealand bank uses Kofax to automatically extract data from loan application forms and send it to its Line of Business system. This technology seriously reduces those piles of paper traditionally found on people's desks." Kofax has built-in intelligence – including a review and validation function that asks for human intervention where it cannot extract or validate data. Its intelligence extends to a learn-by-example capability.

"Kofax will validate extracted information by comparing it to data held in other business systems or



databases,” says Twiname. “So when it finds a supplier’s GST number, for example, it can access other systems and check that the supplier’s GST number is valid and also return the suppliers name.”

Twiname, along with others he spoke to for this story, believes there is huge potential with digitalising documents and eliminating the mindless manual processing of paper-based documents once and for all. A number of larger companies have taken on the technology, but Twiname wonders if its adoption is being held up on many sites because of fear that there may be jobs at stake, or jobs re-assigned. “It’s only human that people see [DMS] as threatening, but the positives far outweigh the negatives. For a start there are less data entry errors. There are no lapses in accuracy on Friday afternoons and Monday mornings. And there’s no way humans can cross validate documents with other data on a

system as fast as this technology can.”

There is other, sexier stuff you need to know about document management technology too, about managing documents on the fly, for instance. George Kharoufeh, senior product manager for Kyocera Mita Australia and New Zealand, tells me their Capture2go ‘app’ for iPhone (downloadable from iTunes) is rather impressive. “It allows iPhone users to connect to a wireless network, search for Kyocera devices and print to or scan from their chosen device wherever they may be. A busy executive can scan a document to his iPhone and review it in a cab. If he or she receives a document on the road, they can print directly from the iPhone to their chosen Kyocera device when they return to the office. This is great for doctors who move between locations.

They can scan patient information from the MFD (pull scanning) and view it on the fly on their iPad or iPhone, enabling them to discuss it with patients.”

Similarly, HP has recently launched a range of printers with ePrint technology so businesses and individuals can print documents on the go from a smartphone or tablet just by sending an email. This technology makes printing so much easier; it saves time as you don’t need to fire up a PC or install drivers.

### Better for the environment

DMS technology clearly has its environmental benefits too – businesses can use it as part of their overall sustainable business policy.

“Taking advantage of electronic workflows to optimise paper usage and minimise duplication has clear positive business and environmental benefits,” says Fuji Xerox’s Richard Penny. “By using this technology to move to ‘print-on-demand’, organisations can remove the need for large stores of pre-printed forms and the risk of wastage associated with obsolescence, while also improving version control.

“Creating more efficient business practices also makes businesses

more sustainable,” says Penny. “Improving document processes can have significant impact on areas such as customer service, sales productivity, allocation of administration resource, etc – thereby ultimately driving profitability at both the front and back ends of a business. More profitable businesses are clearly more sustainable businesses.”

Hamish Alexander, country manager for the Imaging and Printing Group at HP New Zealand, also highlights the environmental pluses of the latest MFDs, or MFPs (P for Printers) as he describes them. “HP LaserJet MFPs are often part of the [managed print] solution as they are designed to be energy efficient, reducing customer’s power bills as well as being better for the environment. Instant-on Technology allows the devices to switch into action almost immediately regardless of when they were last used.

“On the solution side, says Alexander, HP SafeCom Pull printing technology helps businesses cut down on printing waste. Our research shows approximately 30 percent of jobs submitted to printer queues are never picked up, but with pull printing the document is stored in the printer until the user collects the job using a swipe card or PIN. If no one collects the job it is not printed, saving paper.”

Everywhere you look there are efficiencies that are good for the planet – provided businesses are diligent in monitoring their MFD and paper usage. Kyocera Mita’s George Kharoufeh reminds us of some basic examples of device functionality that help reduce the paper mountain. They are:

- Two-in-one and four-in-one copy mode (great for the education market).
- Up to 25-in-one print mode (great for advertising or design market).
- Automatic duplex set as default in the device driver.

“The fact that these solutions are available now and have proven success in reducing paper usage, power consumption and general waste, make it harder for businesses to stick to their old practices and not embrace these types of



technologies,” says Kharoufeh. “There are smarter, less wasteful and more efficient ways of doing things which all businesses regardless of size should embrace.”

### Cost savings

Of course, it does all come down to that ‘less paper’ office and our reliance on paper documents for sharing, filing and archiving information. DMS technology has the potential to save

tonnes of paper per year for organisations of all sizes – not to mention postal costs. Twiname knows of one client that used to post 8000 items of paper out every month – now 60 percent goes by email. “Second tier banks are now looking to share documents with end clients electronically – emailing or texting them when they’re available for viewing,” he says. “I know of hospitals that have used specialised wheelbarrows to move paper documents between buildings –

adopting a document management system, linked through MFDs, has the potential for enormous savings.”

Interestingly, the ‘fax’ is making a comeback as part of the DMS evolution. This is not the old fashioned fax machine we’re talking here, but e-fax point-to-point document transmission – now increasingly used for proof of delivery, and, says Twiname, regarded by the legal and medical fraternities as more secure than email. “The legal profession, in particular, is very

“TAKING ADVANTAGE OF ELECTRONIC WORKFLOWS TO OPTIMISE PAPER USAGE AND MINIMISE DUPLICATION HAS CLEAR POSITIVE BUSINESS AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS.”

progressive in this area; even the courts will now accept a sound e-copy if it is the primary source document.”

### DMS today and tomorrow

Today’s electronic document management systems make sense on so many levels, and for organisations of all sizes. They unlock powerful search and retrieval functions that no manual process could ever hope to match. The key when adopting such systems, says Twiname, is to think of multifunctional devices as the point of entry for any document coming into the building.

Of course, the education process is a challenge for system vendors. Fuji Xerox’s Richard Penny admits that for many businesses it is a paradigm shift; just getting their collective heads around automating forms processing can be a real achievement in itself.

“The technology is definitely under-utilised. It’s our job to educate the market on how they can bring it to bear on paper-based processes.” He says device intelligence is increasing, while hardware prices and consumable costs are decreasing – putting the technology well within the reach of smaller businesses.

“Nowadays we take a consultative approach, with the view to deliver a total document management solution to the client,” he says. “The ‘grudge purchase’ days are over. It’s not about buying the cheapest box. It’s about reallocating resources, improving

admin tasks and realising that the savings far outweigh any extra investment.

“If you’ve always relied heavily on manual paper-based processing, it’s not a luxury to consider a better way of doing it.”

I’m guessing that the “better way” he’s referring to involves clicking on ‘Print’ a lot less often too.

Glenn Baker is editor of NZBusiness.



### WEBSITES TO VISIT:

[www.smartconnect.co.nz](http://www.smartconnect.co.nz)  
[www.fujixerox.co.nz](http://www.fujixerox.co.nz)  
[www.konicaminolta.co.nz](http://www.konicaminolta.co.nz)  
[www.hp.co.nz](http://www.hp.co.nz)  
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