

Digitising paper records

Efficiency without limitations

Converting documents into digital formats increases efficiency and reduces administration costs.

However, success depends on choosing the right scanner for the job.



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Lifting the lid on business inefficiency

Shelves, paper and dust. This is where business inefficiency begins, in archives stuffed with paper documents containing information that is potentially useful to the business, but completely isolated from its most vital workflows. Instead, critical processes should be fed by all available data, to give maximum support to the company's decision-making capabilities.

This goal is attainable, but it requires the development of a fully digitised information pool that even paper documents can become part of, thanks to the simple process of digitisation.

The risk of making mistakes at each stage (production, printing, registration, archiving and retrieval) is very high, without even considering the time and resources that each of these activities requires.

By contrast, digital document management can provide enormous benefits to companies, such as complete traceability of information, integration of information into workflows and external processes, faster completion of the various document handling stages and a reduction in process costs, including physical storage space.

Why digitise documents?

The digital conversion of paper documents liberates the information contained on the printed pages so that it can feed into business processes. In particular, the conversion of paper documents allows:

- Faster information sharing
- Real-time processing of replies
- Remote access to data
- Better protection of information
- More efficient and fully traceable operational flows
- Integration of documents into existing digitised processes
- Transmission of information via multiple communication channels
- Savings in terms of physical storage space.



Digitisation supports compliance and mitigates risk

Scanning all documents and storing them in digital formats are two essential cornerstones in all corporate compliance and risk mitigation initiatives. They enable businesses to consistently provide legible copies of supporting and official documentation at any time, when requested by auditors. Nevertheless, many organisations still underestimate the importance of document scanning in their corporate governance, even though established legislation concerning substitute storage gives electronic documents intrinsic value for tax and legal purposes.



A one-stop digitisation station

As companies develop constantly expanding and shared information pools, they are forced towards the wholesale digital conversion of their existing paper documents.

This is a particularly critical process requiring professional capture tools that are not only highly versatile, but also capable of handling high quantities. Generally speaking, the volume of documents that a company needs to convert is considerable and encompasses a wide range of paper densities and formats, as well as originals that are often compromised by continuous handling.

These are all factors that rule out the use of multifunction appliances commonly found in offices. Designed to perform a wide variety of tasks (from printing and photocopying to scanning and faxing), these devices provide basic document capture functions for occasional use only.

By contrast, standalone scanners are designed to help businesses achieve strategic digital transformation by expediting document capture, management, processing and delivery operations using highly advanced features.

They are not only capable of handling heavy workloads, but also routing scans to the most relevant workflows and improving renderings of original documents.



Multifunction appliances vs standalone scanners

Comparison of features (Model dependent)	Multifunction	Standalone
High scanning volumes	No	Yes
Automatic document feed (ADF)	Not all	Yes
Range of paper thicknesses	Limited	Broad
Plastic card scanning through ADF	No	Yes
Duplex scanning	Not all	Yes
Advanced software included	No	Yes
Punch hole removal	No	Yes
Margin clean-up	No	Yes
Stain removal	No	Yes
Page alignment	No	Yes
Roller system capable of handling high workloads	No	Yes
High scanning speed	No	Yes
Simplified connectivity	No	Yes

Scanners in three shapes and sizes

Standalone scanners come in three formats; portable, compact and desktop, depending on the requirements of the operating environments.



1. Portable

Mobile scanning devices give frontline workers an extremely handy option for protecting and sharing critical information while on the move. Generally, they offer a choice between a USB power supply or a rechargeable battery and enable the professional capture of up to 100 pages per day.

Their biggest strengths are that they are lightweight and compact, characteristics that enable documents to be scanned anytime, anywhere.



2. Compact

These scanners are designed for more demanding work environments and are the ideal solution for improving efficiency in offices where space is limited, while providing the necessary flexibility to be easily moved between departments and hot desks.

Highly intuitive to use, these devices normally offer wireless connectivity, duplex scanning and specific slots for plastic cards, plus a workload capacity of up to 500 pages per day. They are ideal for use in home office, customer service and retail sales settings.



3. Desktop

Desktop scanners are designed for workloads of 1,500 to 5,000 pages per day and can scan and store a high volume of documents in various formats extremely quickly and accurately. An automatic document feeder (ADF) makes this type of device especially suitable for batch scanning, ensuring secure and reliable digital conversion of all paper materials for integration into different workflows.

This category also includes professional scanners for mass volume filing, which can scan around 6000 pages per day. Due to their excellent paper handling and sophisticated image reprocessing capabilities, together with the availability of flatbed designs, this type of scanner is ideal for scanning and filing multiple documents, booklets and even bound documents.

How to choose a scanner

There are many factors to consider when choosing which scanner to purchase. The success of a company's digitisation process is largely dependent on identifying a scanner with features that best suit the company's operational requirements.

For example, if a company needs to process various types of documentation, it is important to check that the device incorporates mixed document feeding to cope with different paper weights and sizes; a long paper mode to capture unusually long documents; and a linear paper path option for aligning documents and ensuring high-quality scans.

If a professional finish is needed, image processing features are an essential consideration, these include:

- Automatic straightening to ensure accurate scans
- Blank page removal to reduce file size and document preparation times
- Binarisation to lighten or darken document images
- Stain removal to produce better scans of original documents
- Background processing to enhance legibility.

Some scanners also incorporate:

- A punch hole removal function for even cleaner scans
- A margin fill option to remove borders
- Multiple workflow management to save images in monochrome, greyscale or colour depending on their intended use.

Lastly, some devices include:

- An image splitting function to separate documents into multiple files for sharing
- The possibility of duplex scanning to capture both sides of a document and save them as a single image
- A barcode detector that can recognise the type of document from printed pages and directly send the captured information to user-defined destination folders.

Besides hardware features, another factor worth considering is the suite of software that is generally bundled with the scanner. It may include programs that can be used to search scanned documents for texts and images, extract data and share content so that the business can exploit all of the information. Consider OCR (Optical Character Recognition) and PDF processing software, as well as programs for managing scanning devices via a PC. Particularly important are drivers, which ensure that scanning devices are fully interfaceable with the work environments where they will be used.

The most popular standards on the market are currently ISIS (Image and Scanner Interface Specification), TWAIN and SANE (Scanner Access Now Easy). They are extremely useful because they enable scanners to be quickly integrated into any work system. Also, there are development platforms that some vendors supply to facilitate customisation of their imaging and printing devices.

This is an interesting option that enables devices to be utilised even more efficiently. In this case, however, be sure to evaluate the type of programming language used, opting for open source, device-independent languages so that customisations can be reused on all other office products.



Customisation made easy with the Brother Solutions Interface*

Brother Solutions Interface (BSI) is a software development platform that helps third-party developers to create and deliver custom solutions for Brother printing and scanning products in an extremely simple way.

Based on Web services technology, the platform enables all solutions to be stored on a central server (on-premises or in the cloud) rather than having to install them on each individual device, thus reducing the time and effort required by conventional start-up and updating operations.

Compared with competitors' platforms, BSI also uses a set of standardised and open commands that can run on any device, regardless of its specifications. In terms of costs and resources, this delivers great savings for businesses, which can quickly introduce custom solutions (such as document routing through

barcode scanning* or activation of different user profiles by means of NFC card identification) to speed up their various workflows.

By contrast, the Custom UI** tool that Brother offers as an add-on for touchscreen scanners utilises each machine's onboard intelligence. Specifically, this option makes it possible to develop personalised interfaces for each individual device by changing the display and functions with customisable icons to introduce shortcuts and speed up the user experience.

Uncompromising scans

Supporting both wired and wireless connectivity, the **ADS-3600W** desktop scanner offers advanced features that enable mid-to large size workgroups to easily capture, manage, process and deliver documents.

The 50-sheet automatic document feeder (ADF) allows single-pass scanning of up to 50 pages per minute, from multi-page, double-sided documents and long single-page documents to receipts, business cards, photos and plastic cards.

In addition to a large touchscreen, the **ADS-3600W** incorporates various image optimisation features including multi-feed detection, background removal and blank page removal. The scanner also includes a suite of scanning software, including OCR, PDF editing and document management programs.

Connecting to the scanner via Wi-Fi Direct using the Brother iPrint & Scan app enables scanning to a wide range of destinations, including mobile devices (smartphones, tablets and laptops).



Main features

- Scans single and double-sided materials in both black and white and colour in a single pass at up to 50ppm
- 9.3cm touchscreen
- Ethernet and wireless networking, USB 3.0 interface for local connectivity
- High precision scanning
- Versatile scan-to destinations (including Network folders, FTP/SFTP, Microsoft SharePoint, cloud, apps and mobile devices) using the Brother iPrint & Scan app
- Extremely simple scanning of documents, photos, plastic cards and business cards

* Model dependent ** Custom UI software only available on ADS-2800W and ADS-3600W

Needs and solutions by sector

Each industry sector has unique parameters and highly specific document needs. These requirements can be satisfied by a variety of scanners so it's important to know which ones have the most suitable capabilities and functions. Sector by sector, these are the most common document needs and the technical capabilities designed to meet them.

Healthcare

Hospitals, dental clinics and GP practices have a growing need to digitally store information in an accurate and secure way. Digitisation is an effective solution not only to the problem of space (which is often limited to the reception area), but also that of security, which is an ongoing concern in this sector.

Typical documents handled:

- Patient documentation
- Prescriptions
- Identity documents
- Letters to patients and other documents

Scanning features required:

- Mixed document feeding
- Duplex scanning of identity documents
- Long paper scanning
- Compact footprint

Recommended Brother models: **ADS-1600W, ADS-2100e and PDS-6000**

Logistics

Digitally converting delivery documents makes them extremely easy to manage. In particular, it accelerates fulfilment times, increases the efficiency of back-office operations and brings filing administration into compliance with disaster recovery rules.

Typical documents handled:

- Delivery receipts
- Transport documents
- Certificates of origin
- Regulatory documents

Scanning features required:

- High speed for high volumes
- Mixed document feeding
- Multifeed detection
- White page removal

Recommended Brother models: **ADS-2200, ADS-3600W and PDS-6000F**

Public administration

Digitisation enables public administrators to efficiently handle confidential information by converting paper documents into digital, searchable, protected and regulatory-compliant data files. However, accomplishing this task requires scanners capable of meeting stringent security requirements and handling heavy workloads at a sustainable cost.

Typical documents handled:

- Application forms
- Certificates
- Permissions
- Archival documents

Scanning features required:

- High speed for high volumes
- Mixed document feeding
- Multi-feed detection
- White page removal

Recommended Brother models: **ADS-3000N, PDS-5000 and PDS-5000F**

Education

Schools, universities and other academic establishments can improve the efficiency of their processes by scanning student documents and streamlining their back-office document systems.

Typical documents handled:	Scanning features required:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student documents• Class assignments• Reports• Workbooks and task sheets• Letters and reminders• Parental permission slips	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High speed for high volumes• Mixed document feeding• Long paper scanning• Flatbed scanning for textbooks

Recommended Brother models: **ADS-2800W, ADS-3600W and PDS-5000F**

Legal sector

Administrative companies and insurance firms are handling more and more documents in digital format, not only to comply with regulations but also to enhance customer satisfaction. Digitisation reduces the amount of time and effort required for long-term archiving. Case Management Systems

Typical documents handled:	Scanning features required:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legal contracts• Insurance policies• Invoices• Accounting documents• Receipts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High speed for high volumes• Mixed document feeding• Automatic cropping and straightening• White page removal

Recommended Brother models: **ADS-2400N, ADS-2800W, ADS-3600W and PDS-6000F**

Retail

Digitisation enables retailers to digitally convert a wide range of day-to-day documents. Delivery notes, orders and invoices can be scanned instantly to simplify the work of store personnel or managers.

Typical documents handled:	Scanning features required:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delivery notes and receipts• Inventory and production documents• Copies of orders and invoices• Goods return forms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High speed for high volumes• Mixed document feeding• Compact footprint• Automatic cropping and straightening• Scanning to PC, network, USB or cloud services

Recommended Brother models: **ADS-1600W, ADS-2700W and ADS-3600W**

Offices

Offices can greatly benefit from scanning a wide range of business documents, thereby reducing costs associated with storage space, increasing process efficiency, eliminating unprotected digital copies and complying with environmental regulations and HR guidelines.

Typical documents handled:	Scanning features required:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invoices/receipts/expenses• Payslips and tax forms• Personnel and customer records• Confidential documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High speed for high volumes• Multi-feed detection• Automatic cropping and straightening• White page removal• Compact footprint• Automatic duplex scanning

Recommended Brother models: **ADS-1100W, ADS-2400N, PDS-5000F and PDS-6000**

Winning combinations

In order to ensure full optimisation of processes, effective document management often requires the combination of multiple imaging and printing devices.

Scanners enable critical data to be shared across multiple workflows, whereas label and mobile printers can help to speed up document routing within the most relevant workflows or expedite the collection of signatures and permissions by frontline personnel. Let's see in detail which types of business are most likely to benefit from combining multiple imaging and printing devices:



Insurance

Insurers often send their customers contracts that need to be signed and recorded in the shortest possible time. Using a portable printer in combination with a mobile scanner makes it easier to close the process by instantly capturing endorsed documents for filing and sharing.

Brother recommends pairing the Bluetooth-enabled PJ-763 mobile thermal printer with the DS-920DW single-pass duplex scanner with wireless connectivity, for maximum autonomy and total mobility.



Tax advice centres

Employees of tax advice centres are required to file till receipts and full receipts in a highly regimented system. In these cases, using a label printer designed to identify folders and files in combination with a scanner capable of handling multiple paper formats would be extremely useful.

Specifically, Brother recommends pairing the ADS-2800W touchscreen network scanner with the QL-800 label printer.



Warehousing

By applying barcodes produced by a label printer, goods received notes and invoices can easily be identified by the scanner's OCR program, which distinguishes them based on their content and instantly directs the documents to the work folders of the relevant offices.

In this case, Brother recommends combining the QL-820NWB label printer with a high-speed professional scanner.

Learn more about Brother scanning solutions at
<https://www.brother.co.uk/business-solutions/scanning-solutions>

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