

Buying Tips

Document Scanners

- ✓ There's a big difference between multipurpose scanners (which can do a little document scanning along with photo and graphics scanning) and dedicated document scanners that do nothing else.
- ✓ Low and midrange scanners come with document management software; with most heavy-duty scanners, it's assumed you'll be using major league document management software from companies like Kofax, Hummingbird, or other vendors.
- ✓ Decide if you need full 11" x 17" (ledger-size) scanning or can get along with scanning normal office-size pages (up to 8.5" x 14").
- ✓ Decide whether you want a distributed (desktop) setup or a centralized (back-office) setup for scanning. In the back-office scenario, you'll have dedicated personnel doing the scanning, rather than occasional scans by non-specialist employees. Note that an exciting new set of desktop scanners with sophisticated software is available.
- ✓ While there used to be big gaps in quality and reliability between vendors, those gaps have narrowed. Determine your requirements and get bids from several vendors.
- ✓ Color scanning was once a luxury; now it is standard on most scanners. As office documents more and more are printed in color, color scanning gets more important.
- ✓ Resolution is not a big deal in document scanning. 200dpi is generally more than adequate.
- ✓ Double-feed detection is an important feature, as it helps avoid missing a page that gets stuck to another page. The best double-feed technology, using ultrasound, was once confined to high-end scanners; now many very affordable scanners offer it.
- ✓ Imaging software and firmware (like Kofax's VRS) are being built into more and more low- to mid-range scanners. It helps clear up a number of problems with originals that are not in mint condition.
- ✓ A hot feature is multistreaming, the ability to send two versions of the scan to disk. This means you get an editable and searchable file (through OCR) as well as a snapshot of the original (to save signatures, notes, etc.).
- ✓ Raw speed helps, but most time in document scanning is spent preparing documents for scanning. Activities such as smoothing folds, eliminating staples and paper clips, and making sure the pages are in good order often take more time than the actual scanning itself.