

Document Imaging Report

Business Trends on Converting Paper Processes to Electronic Format

4003 Wood Street ● Erie, PA 16509 ● PH (814) 866-2247 ● <http://www.documentimagingreport.com>

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Ricoh IDS More than a Digital Mailroom

We've heard the term "digital mailroom" tossed around in our market for the past 15 years. It brings to mind visions of scanning incoming mail and delivering it to recipients as document images. Ricoh's new Intelligent Delivery Services (IDS) strives to be more than that. "Our goal is to deliver mail to the right person in the right format," explained Nicole Blohm, senior product manager-product marketing (managed services) for Ricoh USA.

The process associated with IDS is patent pending. It evolved from the traditional mailroom services that Ricoh already provides onsite for 1,200 customers. According to a press release from Ricoh, "The process of inbound mail delivery and return mail has seen little change in the past century. Yet, despite this lack of change, mail costs have spiked by 40 percent (*Inbound Mail, Delivery and Return Mail Assessment Study, Madison Advisors*, Sept. 2014)."

Ricoh has leveraged modern technologies, like capture and analytics, to address the static mail process. The result is IDS, which works something like this:

■ Mail is delivered to the mailroom by USPS and other courier services.

■ A first-pass scan is done, which captures an image of the envelope, as well as the sender and recipient information.

■ The recipient receives an e-mail with a link to the image of the envelope. (Images can be stored either on a Ricoh cloud server or on the customers' internal servers.)

■ The recipient chooses what they'd like done with a piece of mail. Options include, content is scanned and delivered as an image; mail is discarded; physical mail is delivered to the recipient; mail is scanned and entered into a specific workflow.

■ A second-pass scan is done of the envelopes, during which they are sorted depending on the choices the recipients have made.

■ Some contents are scanned and delivered digitally, others are delivered physically, and still others are discarded.

IDS offers benefits in areas like compliance and improved efficiencies. "As soon as each piece of mail is scanned, it receives a unique identifier in the form of a Bates stamp," said Blohm. "The creates a chain of custody and enables IDS to track the mail and see what ultimately happens to it."

Blohm explained how this capability could have been a

big help to one of Ricoh's traditional mailroom customers. "They had mail coming in that, for compliance reasons, they needed to respond to by a certain date," she said. "For some reason, the appropriate people were not being made aware that this mail was coming in, so they were obviously missing the compliance deadlines and had to pay fines. IDS will not only alert them to the arrival of that mail, but enable them to track what happens to it."

IDS also fits nicely with the increasing trend of a mobile and/or remote workforce. "IDS relies on e-mail addresses, which typically don't change during the time a person is employed by a company," said Blohm. "In contrast, an employee's physical location can change multiple times. IDS eliminates missed deliveries and any costs and inconvenience associated with them."

IDS is being offered as a service, initially by Ricoh USA with plans to expand the offering globally. "It's being sold as a managed services agreement; the customer pays a subscription fee, which is determined primarily based on the number of users they have," said Blohm. "The required hardware can be purchased

separately. We are targeting organizations with more than 4,000 pieces of mail per day and a campus type work environment that might be spread out in multiple buildings at a single location or organizations that have multiple locations or employees that work remotely and travel a lot."

As part of IDS, customers receive bi-annual consulting services. "Reports and analytics are part of the offering; we will come back on a regular basis and review those reports with our customers," said William Robertson, senior manager, product marketing -advanced & managed services, Ricoh USA. "We build a record for our customer of every piece of mail that comes in and what happens to it. The ability to measure what goes on with mail is a big advantage of IDS over traditional mail delivery. It creates visibility and enables our customers to make adjustments to optimize their mail flow.

"Let's say a certain employee is consistently receiving purchase order requests from a particular customer, and after that employee opens them, those PO requests are always forwarded to someone in accounting. With IDS, the customer could see that this is happening repeatedly and be able to eliminate a step by having the PO requests sent directly from the mailroom to accounting."

Reducing touches helps reduce mail processing costs—a formula which is also applicable to junk mail. "It's estimated that up to 35% of all mail can be junk, and IDS can ensure that junk mail is disposed of without its leaving the mailroom," said Blohm. "There is also cost savings associated with being able to reduce returned mail. It's estimated each piece of returned mail costs on organization \$10-20. IDS' reporting can ensure that mail doesn't keep getting sent to the same address and returned."

Unlike what most people think of when they hear "digital mailroom," Robertson stressed that IDS offers the option of physical delivery. "If the content of an envelope is sensitive, for example, and the user doesn't want anyone else seeing it, IDS can account for that," he said. "IDS is about addressing how a user wants to receive their mail. It gives them the option of receiving it on their mobile devices if they are traveling, for example. They can already receive e-mail and text on their phones; IDS enables physical mail to become part of that mobile ecosystem, which is where a lot of business is done these days."

"IDS is really focused on improving how people work," concluded Blohm. "It's not just about opening mail and scanning it. We are trying to optimize mail delivery, reduce processing time, and drive better business decisions."

For more information: <http://bit.ly/RicohIDS>

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Editor: Ralph Gammon
4003 Wood Street
Erie, PA 16509
PH (814) 866-2247
ralphg@documentimagingreport.com

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