

white paper:

# Imaging Guide:

How To Plan a Document Conversion



## Moving to an [electronic records system](#) can provide tremendous value to any organization, but it has to be planned and executed perfectly if you are to fully realize this value.

The conversion process is filled with challenges, and getting the right resources in place before, during and after is critical. If it isn't done right, your vital information and business operations can be adversely affected. This paper will outline some of the steps you'll need to take in order to successfully plan and execute your document conversion. Because the resources and expertise needed for conversion are generally beyond the capacity of most businesses, the information provided here is also intended to give you the knowledge you need to select the right records management partner to help you with your conversion.

### Getting Started

There are several key steps and practices necessary for the successful conversion of your organization's documents.

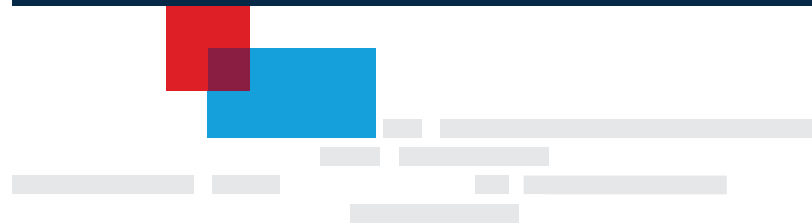
#### Start with a Document Assessment

You can save a significant amount of time and money by properly examining and identifying what documents need to be stored as electronic files. Retaining professional records management consultants can be very helpful in this process. Things to look at when examining documents:

#### Retention periods

You must analyze your retention requirements before the imaging project starts to avoid destroying documents before they are scheduled. This analysis will also prevent unnecessarily scanning documents that are ready for destruction. Retrieval patterns should also be examined to see how frequently certain documents are accessed and fit that into future workflows.

If your organization is converting backfile documents that are rarely accessed or needed, then consider outsourcing to a company specializing in document conversions. This will eliminate the costs of purchasing equipment, and training or hiring personnel to image documents.



#### Security

While paper documents can be easily secured by placing them in a restricted access space, this changes when the same documents are converted. You will have to examine the contents of all sensitive and confidential documents that will be available through imaging and design a set of procedures to control access to these documents. If security measures and viewing rights are not established, unrestricted access to classified information may occur.

#### Purging Duplicate and Redundant Material

Over time, files may come to contain several copies of the same document or material. This redundant material needs to be identified before the conversion starts. At that point you can either destroy the documents, or separate them from other documents in the file that need to be imaged. Purging files of all unnecessary information not only reduces the volume of paper that needs to be stored as well as the overall cost of conversion.

## Outsourcing vs. In-house

Deciding where the conversion will occur is critical. You can outsource the project to a professional records management company, you can do it onsite, or combine the two. So how do you decide? The nature of the files to be converted will dictate this. You have to consider things like the volume of the collection you want to convert, the security and privacy of the documents, as well as the physical condition of the documents. Once you've carefully examined the files that will be converted, you'll have a better idea of what you'll need in terms of project, space, equipment and staff, and this will greatly impact the initial decision of whether to outsource.

### Project Requirements

**Day Forward Conversion:** Newly created and incoming documents are typically imaged on a daily basis. Generally these documents need to be available to staff for a certain period of time, and sending these documents offsite for imaging may not be possible. Doing it in-house means investing in imaging equipment and conversion software. This will require a significant amount of research to find the imaging system that best suits your needs, an overwhelming task if you aren't familiar with imaging technology. You will also have to carefully determine staffing requirements around the project. It is likely that you will need additional personnel to operate and maintain the system you choose. Space is also a major consideration, because you'll need plenty of room for document preparation, scanning equipment and computers.

**Backfile Conversion:** Backfile conversion simply means the process whereby large volumes of legacy documents are replaced with digital images. If your organization is converting backfile documents that are rarely accessed or needed, then consider outsourcing to a company specializing in document conversions. This will eliminate the costs of purchasing equipment, and training or hiring personnel to image documents.

If you go this route, conduct a thorough investigation of the qualifications and experience of the document conversion company. Do they have the type of equipment and software needed to perform the conversion? Can they provide the appropriate technical expertise and support? What is the project turnaround time? What type of insurance, security procedures, and document control do they provide? These are critical questions to ask when choosing a document conversion partner.

### Backfile and Day Forward Conversions

Making a choice between in-house and outsourcing is more difficult if both types of conversions are required. Your organization may want to use a document conversion company to execute the backfile conversion while an imaging system is implemented onsite to handle day forward production.

## Workflow and Indexing

A successful conversion requires the development of a workflow for processing documents and determining what indexing method will be used. Again, when evaluating workflow and indexing requirements, consideration must be given to the type of conversion being performed.

### Day forward Conversion

**Workflow:** Creating an automated workflow for day forward imaging requires understanding what happens to a specific document as it is routed through the workplace. Detecting and improving weaknesses or inefficiencies in the existing workflow are an essential component of this step. This information will help you select an automated workflow solution.

**Indexing:** This is the step where a document is given one or more identifying labels so it can be located and retrieved later. Identifying day forward documents can be a more complex process than that of a backfile conversion so more time may be needed to process images.



## Backfile Conversion

Workflow: In a typical backfile conversion thousands of pages per day are captured. A short processing workflow is essential and all processes need to work simultaneously. While one image is being indexed, another should be going through image enhancement or being checked for quality control.

**Indexing:** Because such a high volume of paper is imaged daily, indexing procedures should not be complex. Identifying individual pages is time consuming, especially for those documents that are not accessed very often. An indexing structure containing all of the data required to identify an entire file folder or a multipage document can be used.

## Tracking: Keeping Files Accessible

Keeping documents accessible during the conversion process is essential for the daily operation of your organization.

### Tracking Software

File tracking software allows you to keep track of files as they are routed through the conversion process. By placing bar codes on documents and then scanning each into the system as it goes through the process, you gain the ability to locate your critical information at any time. These same bar codes may be used when the conversion is complete. This is a highly efficient way to track documents and separate them during the imaging process, but a bar code scanning system requires careful monitoring and complete accuracy. If a particular document file is incorrectly scanned or missed, then the time it takes to locate requested documents is significantly delayed. You may want to implement a system of cross referencing databases and multi-tiered inventory matching to ensure accuracy.

## Auditing the Scanned Image

To help ensure the integrity of long-term and archival records stored on the system, a visual quality control evaluation of each scanned image and related index data should be performed. The scanned image should be written to optical media only after the evaluation process is completed. Training and supervision of the operations staff is a key factor in maintaining acceptable image and index quality as well as user satisfaction with the system.

## After the Scan

After the project is complete is the optimal time to determine the best storage options for files and documents. Things to bear in mind when designing post-scan procedures:

### Electronic document availability

Make sure an electronic document retrieval system is in place so that users can view and print imaged documents immediately. You also have to make sure that users have been properly trained to use the system. Because accessing documents in this way will be a big change for some people, you may want to retain certain scanned documents on site so that they may be accessed while users get used to the electronic retrieval system.

### Back on the shelf

As some imaged documents may need to remain on site for a certain length of time, some documents will have to be restored to their pre-scan state. This can be a time and labor intensive process involving stapling, rebinding and re-collating.

A bar code scanning system is a highly efficient way to track documents, but requires careful monitoring and complete accuracy. If a particular document file is incorrectly scanned or missed, then the time it takes to locate requested documents is significantly delayed.

## The Transition

Moving from a paper based system to an electronic records system is fraught with challenges and the transition has to be seamless. Your conversion team should help your staff in understanding and using the new technology.

By providing proper training and support during this time you will increase the chances of staff readily accepting the change. The following steps can be taken to facilitate this:

### Illustrate the Advantages

Demonstrating the advantages of using the new system to locate, view and retrieve documents is one of the best ways to get buy-in. Once staff realize that using electronic documents will make them more efficient, they are more likely to abandon old habits. You should also continue to provide demonstrations and training of the new system.

### Eliminate Delays During & Immediately After

Ensuring that all requests for files/documents are fulfilled on a timely basis both during and after the conversion goes a long way to facilitating a smooth transition and buy-in. Staff attitudes are influenced by how their current work processes are affected by the conversion. If they get the information they need when they need it, the project will be seen in a positive light.

### Keep Everyone informed

Keeping staff informed of progress, as well as any problems or issues that arise throughout the duration of the project is essential. Many people will have questions and concerns, and you should anticipate these and provide the necessary information as soon as possible. Good communication between personnel and key stake-holders in the project is key for the success of a document conversion.

By providing proper training and support during this time you will increase the chances of staff readily accepting the change to an electronic records system.



## TAB's Approach

TAB helps you “connect the document value” when looking to implement and integrate a document management solution in a business process or across the enterprise. Legacy systems (paper based) still provide significant value in making critical decisions in a particular business process—but not all documents carry the same value. Choosing the right process to capture and properly categorize electronic documents is essential for businesses to achieve and maintain efficiency and automation within the organization.

This is accomplished through the proper mix of consulting and professional services. The process we use includes:

### Records Survey

Evaluating and examining documents and files to prepare for conversion process:

- Quantity of documents
- Document types
- Media containers and the document assembly
- Work with the client to review retention periods and arrive at archive status of records
- Determine database availability of records
- Map the access and flow of documents in the business process and association with various users

Legacy systems (paper based) still provide significant value in making critical decisions in a particular business process—but not all documents carry the same value. Choosing the right process to capture and properly categorize electronic documents is essential for businesses to achieve and maintain efficiency and automation with the organization.

## Workflow Plan

We develop a workflow plan that incorporates the records survey content and outlines the processes and procedures for the conversion process. The plan will identify all key aspects of the project including:

- Document prep
- Scanning
- Document distribution during business hours
- Document location
- Methodology for uncertainties in indexing characteristics
- Procedures for flagging files that may require client intervention
- Project timelines
- Staffing requirements
- Physical space requirements
- Sign-offs

## Conversion Plan

Our conversion plan begins with determining the appropriate document capture software and build application and is carried out by our Document Conversion Teams as follows:

**Prep Team:** Performs required tasks to get the project in motion

**Scanning Team:** Uses production scanners to meet timelines

**Quality Control Team:** Evaluates questionable images or reviews a percentage of scans and indexes images if required. Finally, Quality Control reassembles the files and returns them to shelving or long term storage.

The conversion may occur on-site or off-site premises, depending on your requirements.

## Document Scanning and Conversion

Which documents, how are they to be accessed, on-site or off-site, what format and how regulatory requirements affect retention. These are just a few of the issues to be addressed. TAB can work with you to determine all of these factors, then provide the services for capture and storage. Scanning documents involves:

### STEP 1: Document Preparation

This includes staple removal, repairing torn documents with clear tape, rotation of the documents all to one orientation, and placing documents into a consistent sequence. If indexing is done via a separator sheet, they can be placed into the file during preparation.

### STEP 2: Scanning/Indexing

After preparation, the documents are fed into the scanner. Indexing may be via the keyboard or bar codes placed on the separator sheets. Indexing can be to the file level or to the document level within the file. Software used in the capture process allows for forms to be recognized which can expedite the indexing process and improve image quality.

### STEP 3: Post Scan Process

Documents that go to scanning will require some type of disposition. They may need to be returned to be refiled in the original file or to storage. New technology can be integrated to use both the original files hand-in-hand with any new electronic solution.

**Our team can provide many alternatives that meet your requirements.**

As departments or agencies move to host portals, a variety of information will be made available to their customers. Content should deliver key messages and may be customized to fit customer profiles. Current web content is delivered in a few primary formats (HTML for web page development and other information in Adobe's PDF). Trying to stay abreast of industry changes and having the internal resources convert content may slow your efforts to meeting your knowledge and content management objectives. TAB can convert your content using any of these common industry formats allowing you to better service your customers by delivering ongoing timely content and not spending time getting it ready to deliver.

## We Can Help

Planning and executing a document conversion is a major undertaking, and most organizations can use all the help they can get. If you are thinking about converting your paper documents to electronic format, contact TAB today.

**UNITED STATES**  
888-822-9777

**CANADA**  
800.387.6212

[tab.com](http://tab.com)

