I have set up a number of scanning systems throughout my experience with Kofax. While doing so, I recommend weighing the pros and cons between centralized and decentralized scanning. It is important to determine what advantages and disadvantages you want in your environment. Determining what those pros and cons are can often be directed by organizational goals or even the current licensing structure your organization has in place.

Let’s start by making sure that there is clarity in our understanding of centralized and decentralized scanning. Centralized scanning is a process in which all scanning is done in one location, or all scanning activities are accomplished in a central place. On the other hand, a decentralized scanning process utilizes more than one location for your scanning activities. A centralized scanning process would require all documents to be shipped to a central location where they are scanned. A decentralized scanning process could include a scanner at each remote office or a scanner for each department.

I recommend utilization of a decentralized scanning process because it allows the processing of documents to be done by the knowledge workers. Having the knowledge workers process documents helps ensure that the data associated with the document is correct and can often speed up the business process. This can be done by installing a single remote site computer that serves as a scan station and uses smaller scanners. In situations where your organization may require multiple remote-site scanning access, it is simple to setup a web capture platform like Kofax Web Capture. In this configuration, each remote location will login to the web page and scan their documents rather than having individual scan stations or a centralized scanning process.

Decentralized scanning is simple to setup and allows for small adoption sets. It is easy to implement by allowing your users to use their local MFP to scan. Or, in a large building, it could be helpful to put a scanner on each floor. The time to scan and process documents within each department or location is often quicker than the time it takes to gather or package the document and send them to a different location. To have the knowledge workers perform the processing there are three options:

1. Install Citrix on a few servers and provide access to the client through the Citrix interface.
2. Utilize a web platform for processing documents, such as with the Kofax Transformation Modules Thin Client.
3. Install a full client on individual computers.

Keep the IT staff in mind as you evaluate the options. IT staff may have a preference when it comes to the number of systems that require individual installs and maintenance.

For more information regarding this topic or other suggestions for streamlining your business processes, contact us at: marketing@doxtek.com or 866-678-8400.
Not every organization has the same limitations or needs when it comes to a scanning process. However, my experience has led me to draw the following conclusions;

**Decentralized scanning**

**Pros:**
1. Scanning from where the document originates allows the documents to enter into the business process more quickly. Decentralized scanning prevents the need to account for mail shipping times or worry about losing the document during the forwarding process. Additionally, you are more likely to gain insights into your business process when processing is being performed by the knowledge worker. Bottlenecks and potential problems in a process are readily seen by the knowledge worker and their managers who are concerned about the business process.
2. Reduced shipping costs: when there is no longer a need to forward documents to a centralized location for processing, the process can reduce or eliminate the need for shipping costs to transfer or move documents within the organization. Often the time to scan the document with a quality image is equal to the time required to prepare the document for shipping.
3. Faster processing times - centralized scanning departments will often have backlogs in their processes. After the shipping time to move documents from one location to another, you will have (at best) a 0-2 day delay before the document(s) are scanned.
4. Organizations can utilize existing high quality MFPs (multifunction printers) in remote locations to scan to email in-boxes or network locations.
5. Depending on the process, organizations may not need dedicated physical scanning space at decentralized locations.

**Cons:**
1. You introduce more network traffic. This can lead to a conversation with your IT/IS department, but a critical factor to keep in mind is that if you have too much network traffic, your network becomes very slow.
2. You have more scanners to maintain and potentially more maintenance contracts associated with each piece of hardware.
3. You may need a small space dedicated for document preparation and scanning at each location.
4. More people will be scanning, requiring greater user adoption.
5. The potential for inconsistent scanning and indexing methods increases with more individuals completing the scanning process. Adherence to established procedures is essential.

**Centralized Scanning**

**Pros:**
1. A smaller number of required scanners allow for faster, production level scanners to be implemented without major budget changes.
2. Dedicated scan operators traditionally provide more consistent quality images. When scanning is performed by a team focused on scanning speed you are more likely to gain insights into your capture processes.
3. Physical space utilization is optimized.

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4. There are fewer environmental failure points, as we are not concerned about the connection from remote locations to the scanning environment.
5. Physical security and management is improved, as all documents are in one location.

Cons
1. Production level scanners can be more expensive and physically larger than desktop or workgroup level scanners.
2. With a smaller number of scanners used in the process, scanner down time can cause large backlogs of documents waiting to be scanned/processed. However, data from each document is often processed twice – which can be unnecessary. First, by the knowledge worker early in the document’s life, and again by the centralized scanning team.
3. A larger dedicated space is required for document preparation and scanning. The disaster recovery site needs not only the required servers but a large area for scanning and document preparation as well.
4. A scan-to-archive process is common for this method of organizational scanning. This, in some cases, allows poor quality images to remain unnoticed for years.
5. Shipping costs are incurred when documents are sent from their originating location to the centralized scanning location.

When determining what process is right for your organization, take the time to review your current system. Be thorough in your analysis. If you’d like DoxTek to set up a free consultation for your organization, please give us a call! We would be happy to review your current process and see if we can be of any assistance.

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