

Document Imaging Report

Business Trends on Converting Paper Processes to Electronic Format

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Successful SDK Program Key To eCopy's Growth

Despite ever increasing competition, MFP capture specialist **eCopy** continues to enjoy success. The Nashua, NH-based ISV recently announced there are now 100 commercially available *Connectors* to third-party applications from its *ShareScan* application. Over half these *Connectors* are to ECM applications, with *Connectors* also available to fax server, cost recovery, financial applications, and other types of software as well. eCopy touts *ShareScan's* ability to effectively and easily capture images from almost any vendor's hardware device as a driving force behind its partners' desire to leverage it as middleware.

"The eCopy Open Platform (eOP) provides a development environment that insulates the developer from the need to develop integration to each of the MFP embedded platforms, saving time and money," said Ed Schmid, eCopy's CEO, in a press release announcing the 100 *Connector* milestone. "Developers need only write one *Connector* to eOP and it is available on all major MFP brands."

Indeed, through a combination of its participation in MFP vendor programs for embedding applications, its ScanStation hardware for deploying *ShareScan* in a non-embedded fashion, and *ShareScan's* ability to connect to ISIS scanner drivers, eCopy can

handle image acquisition and processing from almost any device that can scan documents. According to Rick Phillips, group product manager for eCopy, his company potentially saves its ISV partners 100s of hours of development and testing time.

"There are many challenges involved in working with MFP vendors' embedded platforms," Phillips said. "First of all, there are fees associated with each program, and you have to learn each SDK. Just because two vendors have Java platforms doesn't mean you can develop an application for one and use it for the other one. Web services-based platforms have similar compatibility issues. When ISVs write a *Connector* to *ShareScan*, they don't have to worry about any of this. They write one *Connector*, and we map *ShareScan* to each individual hardware platform.

"On top of that, we act as a buffer between the hardware manufacturers and the ISVs. For example, when connecting through *ShareScan*, ISVs don't have to worry about managing image acquisition from various hardware devices. Processes like image processing, compression, creating searchable PDFs, and adding security, are handled differently in Ricoh devices vs. Canon devices. *ShareScan* manages all that and makes it available to ISVs through our

connection wizard. This way, the ISV only has to worry about creating an interface that effectively implements its business logic."

eCopy has also made creating interfaces easier for its partners. "With the latest version of the SDK, we introduced a form designer that enables an ISV to create a common interface that can run across dissimilar hardware platforms," said Phillips. "Our GUI enables them to drag-and-drop components onto a design page. We also offer a style guide, so partners can write *Connectors* that look and feel like other *Connectors* their customers might be using."

According to Phillips, this adds up to tremendous savings for eCopy partners. "The economies of scale that we offer are pretty significant," he said. "When you add up the time it takes to develop, test, launch, and then maintain and update, an application for a hardware platform, and then multiply that by each platform you have to support.... Working with *ShareScan* means an ISV only has to develop for one platform."

EMC is on board

You don't have to sell **EMC's** Sean Baird on the advantages of working with a single interface for multiple hardware devices. As a senior product marketing manager for EMC Captiva, Baird has experience working with the Pixel

Translations ISIS scanner driver business. “At Pixel, we have worked very hard to make ISIS the standard for connecting to all document scanners,” he said. “We certainly looked long and hard at what sort of effort it would take to develop this type of connectivity for MFPs. However, we determined that working with eCopy offers a lot of advantages—in terms of quickly and cost effectively being able to get a *Connector* to market that can address the broad requirements and demands of our customer base.”

EMC has actually developed two *Connectors* for *ShareScan*—one for its *ApplicationXtender* mid-market/departmental ECM system and one for its Captiva *InputAccel* enterprise capture application. eCopy has also developed a *Connector* to EMC’s high-end *Documentum* ECM application. According to Baird, there has been a lot of recent demand for the *InputAccel Connector*.

“We have reached the point where we don’t see distributed capture from the MFP as being disconnected from centralized capture,” said Baird. “Customers are asking how they can augment their back-office, high-volume scanning [*InputAccel*’s traditional sweet spot] with different types of scanning in different departments and lines of business. And they want it all to be integrated with IA.

“Our *ShareScan Connector* is a great way to accomplish this. It enables users to log-in and get their credentials through IA. This means if they are only cleared to execute a certain scanning workflow, such as invoice capture in an A/P department, that’s all that will come up on the *ShareScan* interface. By being able to access IA through *ShareScan*, users have access to the same capabilities, like auto-classification and extraction, that they would in a centralized environment.

“Also, organizations we work with don’t have control over the hardware devices they are using, so *ShareScan*’s ability to work with multiple MFP brands is important to our customer base.”

The road to TCM

ShareScan currently runs embedded in **Ricoh** and **Canon** devices (meaning its interface can be accessed through the MFP touchscreen) and through the Scan Station on other vendors’

products. However, eCopy continues to perform due diligence on the potential of embedding *ShareScan* in other hardware. “We’ve entered into development agreements with 8-10 vendors to assess the viability of their embedded environments,” said Bill Brikiatis, eCopy’s director of corporate marketing. “As these environments mature, and we enter into business agreements with the vendors, we will expand our portfolio of embedded devices.”

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—Rick Phillips, eCopy

This ability to work with multiple MFP brands is attractive to eCopy’s burgeoning VAR channel. “VARs that focus on software sales really don’t want to worry about what vendors’ MFPs their customers are using,” said Brikiatis.

And the VAR channel should continue to grow as the number of *Connector* partners grows. eCopy currently has 230 developers enrolled in its development program, which is divided into two tiers. There is no charge for the basic tier, in which a developer is provided the SDK and some on-line support. For \$2,400 a year, developers receive full support and some joint marketing opportunities. According to Brikiatis, eCopy expects two to three new *Connectors* to come on board each month.

For us, the growing *Connector* program is evidence of how eCopy is moving deeper into the higher-margin transactional content management (TCM) market, after beginning life primarily in the ad hoc, or scan-to-email/desktop space. Through *ShareScan*’s integration with products like *InputAccel*, it offers the best of both worlds—a proven, easy-to-use interface for ad hoc capture and an emerging distributed capture platform for TCM.

eCopy has also helped itself by making *ShareScan* more affordable over the past couple years. The increasing variety of low-priced, ad hoc capture products being offered by MFP vendors may have influenced this move, but it also makes *ShareScan* a more compelling option in TCM environments. As eCopy continues to build its VAR channel, it will be interesting to see how often VARs start offering *ShareScan* running on an already installed MFP as a less expensive alternative to a new distributed scanner—plus the software to run it. Yes, eCopy has always been ahead of the curve in the capture space, and its growing *Connector* program, in conjunction with its emerging VAR channel, is designed to keep it there.