

Understanding the “Three” Root Causes of Process Inefficiency



To paraphrase real estate agents, “It’s all about uncontrolled information, uncontrolled information and uncontrolled information”

Since the 1980s, we have been hearing about paper-free businesses and the drive to move toward a more digital workplace. At the time, the technology and people were not ready for this transformation. Today, the approach to digitally transform businesses has shifted from a technology first perspective to a more business-centric approach, with paper-free processes becoming a focal point and opportunity for many organizations.

The reality for many organizations is that **uncontrolled information** – and especially paper -- still has a stranglehold on day-to-day activities. Many tasks requiring review and approval still require physical interactions with paper-based information. There is clearly room and opportunity for business organizations to maximize their information use and value as well as lower operating costs by removing paper from their business processes.

Information capture is the first step in being paper-free, whether it is digitizing paper using scanners, or capturing digitally created information immediately and maintaining it in digital form. It is the first step to managing and ingesting information into the information ecosystem, business processes, and taking action on it sooner. Mobile capture and the use of cloud enhance and extend this capability.

1 When it comes to getting information under control, good intentions abound.

Organizations have the best of intentions when it comes to getting basic information under control ([AIIM research](#)):

- 81% of organizations say, “Paper-based content and processes are a huge impediment to remote access and teleworking.”
- 79% believe that “business-at-the-speed-of-paper will be unacceptable in a few years’ time.”
- 62% of organizations say “they are committed to digital transformation, and paper-free is an essential starting point.”
- 81% understand the impact that out of control information has on their knowledge workers, agreeing, “Paper-based content and processes are a huge impediment to remote access and teleworking.”

2 For most organizations, the reality of information management falls short.

And yet...and yet...and yet...the reality in most organizations falls short of good intentions. For most organizations, the amount of paper flowing through business processes is *increasing* (19%) or merely *stable* (33%). Consider the following data points from [AIIM surveys](#):

- “Our office is piled high with paper and paper processes.” – 37%
- “Faxes and PDF invoices are printed out before processing.” – 31%
- “Our MFPs are used more for copying than scanning.” – 32%
- “We regularly scan documents, but mostly for archive.” – 51%
- “Contracts, orders, booking forms, etc., are signed on paper.” – 65%
- “Most of our important stuff is referenced and filed as paper.” – 35%
- “Our records system is still primarily paper based.” – 33%

Uncontrolled information is the root cause of **process inefficiency**, which: 1) costs money, 2) wastes time, 3) increases errors, 4) decreases productivity, and 5) increases business risk.



How can you get started? – Consider these 11 ideas.

Taking the first step is better than taking no step at all. If you are unsure of where to begin or how to begin, seek professional assistance and/or training to help you set off on the right path. Look to your current suppliers and service providers for guidance. Turn to your professional associations (like [AIIM!](#)) and peers to find advice and training that will teach you best practices.

1. Identify a process and then document where paper enters your business and processes.
2. Assess where process slowdowns happen and the reason this slowdown occurs.
3. Evaluate how removing paper from operational processes will enhance customer response times, improve the overall customer experience, and save in back-office costs.
4. Identify who is in charge of radical process review and seek endorsement for policies on paper-free processes.
5. Promote successes where digital information and processes copies are being used within your organization.

6. If you have no existing paper-free processes, pick one to trial – AP perhaps, or HR – but be careful not to become locked in to a single-point solution (e.g. from your finance system vendor).
7. Ensure that existing paper-free processes are taking full advantage of OCR, data capture and integration with core enterprise systems.
8. Evaluate how a scan-to-archive post process implementation can be changed to an up-front scan-to-process approach that improves operational efficiency by streamlining the overall process.
9. Position the system “right at the door” as a digital mailroom, defending offices from paper, and ensuring the quickest possible conversion to digital.
10. Do not limit your possibilities to be within the corporate walls. Look for ways to extend capture, access and engagement activities beyond the corporate walls using mobile and cloud applications.
11. Establish a continuous improvement program that will periodically review and refine those changes you make now. When a paper-free project ends, it should be the beginning of an on-going process improvement practice that looks for ways to improve upon the foundation you have set.



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