

Document Conversion FAQs



WHY SHOULD I CONVERT MY DOCUMENTS TO DIGITAL FORMAT?

There are many situations where the inherent limitations of physical documents make them more costly and cumbersome to manage than digital documents. Common reasons for converting include to:

- Accelerate business processes by providing faster, more flexible access to documents
- Streamline the sharing of documents among multiple users and across many locations
- Reduce space requirements and costs for physical document storage and management
- Strengthen the privacy and security of sensitive information
- Comply with regulatory and legal requirements
- Ensure quick restoration of essential records following a natural or man-made disaster.

CAN YOU PROVIDE SOME EXAMPLES OF REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS?

Customer Service: Immediate access to billing records, proof-of-delivery, or credit card receipts allows call agents to resolve customer queries in real time, thus enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty while lowering the cost of service.

Mortgage Lending: By converting mortgage applications to a digital format that can be incorporated into electronic review and approval processes, a lender can process a higher volume of applications more quickly and speed revenue recognition.

Medical Imaging: With an X-Ray on Demand (XOD) solution, a hospital can store all its analog x-ray films off-site, freeing up valuable real estate. When a patient's x-rays are requested, the film can be scanned and a digital image delivered electronically within hours. XOD reduces on-site storage costs, eliminates the need to convert the entire x-ray library, and saves on courier costs.

Intellectual Property: By imaging their patents, a company can ensure fast, reliable and secure access to these sensitive documents for business, regulatory and litigation purposes.

WE USE IRON MOUNTAIN FOR STORAGE OF PAPER RECORDS. WHY SHOULD WE USE YOU FOR IMAGING TOO?

Unique expertise: Iron Mountain is a global leader in document management. We are uniquely qualified to assist in integrating the management your physical and electronic documents – and the conversion of one to the other. Our integrated approach allows us to deliver the most appropriate and cost-effective solution for your specific requirements.

A single chain of custody: Our seamless solutions eliminate chain-of-custody issues – such as misplaced records, missed or late handoffs, and finger pointing – that often result from working with multiple vendors. In many cases, a client's records never have to leave our secure facility.

HOW DO WE DETERMINE WHICH DOCUMENTS TO CONVERT?

Many organizations have already developed a list of high-priority imaging projects. Our consultants can help you prioritize which projects will deliver maximum impact and support your organization's strategic goals (e.g. increasing revenues, improving customer service, shortening time-to-market, etc.)

WILL WE HAVE TO SCAN EVERYTHING?

Not necessarily. After evaluating your situation, Iron Mountain will recommend an approach to scanning that is based on your unique retrieval requirements, desired benefits, and costs. The "rule of thumb" is:

- For often-accessed documents that need to be retrieved quickly, converting all of the documents makes sense.
- For files that have only a few documents that will be referenced out of the whole file, we typically suggest converting only those more-active documents.
- For large backlogs with little retrieval activity, converting "on demand" – only when a user requests that particular document – is often recommended.

DOES IRON MOUNTAIN USE A CENTRALIZED OR A DISTRIBUTED APPROACH TO DOCUMENT CONVERSION?

Our global facilities and innovative technology allow us to take either approach, depending on your particular situation. If documents tend to be generated in a few central locations – such as regional offices – we can perform high-volume conversion activities at a nearby Iron Mountain facility or at your site.

If documents are generated at multiple locations, such as branch offices, we can implement a distributed solution that enables your knowledge workers to initiate the conversion process locally, using desktop software, and then transmit it via the network to an Iron Mountain facility, where the process is completed.

WHAT ARE THE STEPS INVOLVED IN CONVERTING DOCUMENTS?

Every conversion initiative differs. However they all share common elements:

Collection and preparation: The documents are gathered and prepared. Staples and paperclips are removed, pages are oriented, small documents are attached to carrier sheets, and damaged documents are repaired. Some circumstances require verifying the completeness of the file or similar business processing. In many cases, barcode identifiers are affixed to documents or inserted via leading sheets, giving each document a unique identity.

Scanning: Documents in good condition are automatically fed into the scanner. Fragile or damaged documents are manually placed on a flatbed for scanning.

Quality control and image processing: The resulting images are compared to the original to ensure they have all been captured, are complete and as legible as possible, and are oriented correctly. Software is used to “clean up” the image.

Segmentation: To mirror the physical document and to allow retrieval to the right level, related images are grouped into documents, and documents may be grouped into folders.

Indexing: Depending on the situation, indexes are entered manually or generated from the image and may be supplemented with customer-supplied information.

Text conversion: In some cases, an image containing text is scanned to generate the text equivalent, making that content searchable via full-text retrieval engines.

HOW ARE CONVERTED IMAGES DELIVERED?

Images can be delivered in a number of ways. They can be:

- Electronically uploaded to your image repository or Iron Mountain-hosted Image Archive
- Accessed via an FTP site
- Shipped to you on erasable media (USB drive) or read-only media (CD or DVD)
- Sent via e-mail (suitable for small volumes – e.g. on-demand images)

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Every solution is unique, and cost can vary depending on many factors including:

- The amount of work required to prepare the documents for scanning
- The type and size of scanner required. Large formats (e.g. engineering drawings), bound books and microfilm require specialized scanners.
- The desired image resolution. Higher resolutions require more scanning time.
- The condition of documents to be scanned and whether they can be auto fed or must be hand-fed.
- The amount of indexing, image post-processing, and output packaging required (e.g. formatting for a specific imaging system).
- The work required to re-assemble physical documents once scanning is completed.

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