

FROM PAPER TO PRODUCTIVITY **A Modern Guide to Workplace Scanning**



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Why Scanning Still Matters

Your team already uses cloud storage, shared drives, and collaboration tools. Yet people still walk to the copier more than once because the first scan was crooked, too dark, or blurry.

The problem isn't the paper. Paper will always show up in the form of contracts, forms, handwritten notes, invoices, and mail. The real issue is that many scanning practices were never updated to match the rest of your technology.

Outdated scanning creates problems that ripple through the workday:

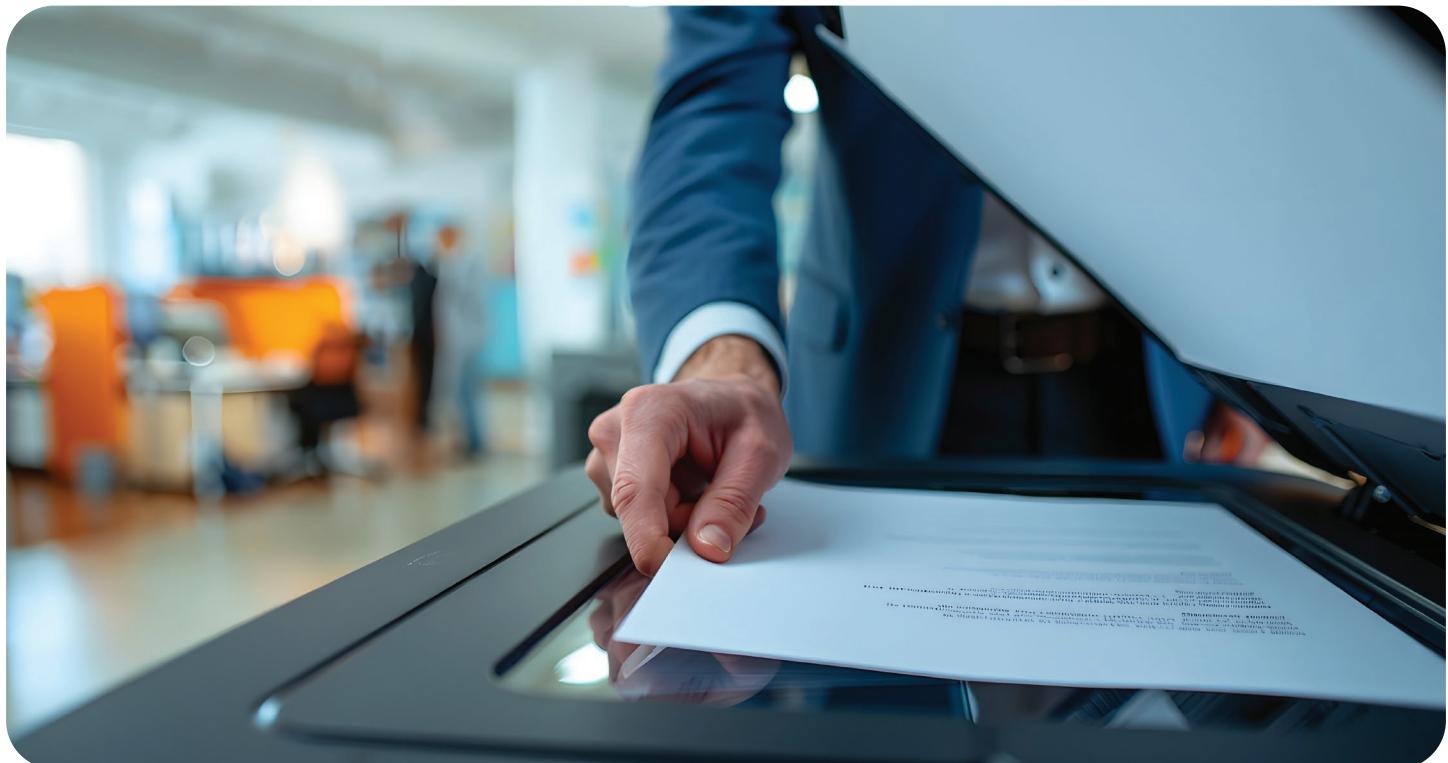
- Poor image quality that slows down approvals or data entry
- Files saved with random names in random folders
- Multiple versions of the same document
- Security gaps when scans are emailed or stored in unsecured locations

Modern scanning can solve these issues. Today's devices and software do much more than turn paper into PDFs. They can:

- Capture high-quality images quickly
- Turn pages into searchable text
- Route files directly to the right folder or workflow
- Apply consistent rules for naming, storage, and security

When scanning runs smoothly, paper blends seamlessly into your digital workflow. When it doesn't, progress slows, teams get frustrated, and avoidable risks creep in.

This guide walks through how modern scanning works, what to look for in devices and workflows, and how to design a process that fits your business. Whether you are beginning digital transformation or improving what you already have, this guide provides a clear path for turning scanning into a reliable part of your everyday workflow.



How Modern Scanning Works Today

Scanning has evolved from a stand-alone task to a core part of everyday information flow. Instead of a single flatbed on someone's desk, most workplaces now rely on networked devices that send documents directly into digital systems.

A few fundamentals sit behind every good scanning setup.

Resolution and Quality

Resolution, measured in DPI (dots per inch), affects how sharp text and images appear. Too low and small text looks soft. Too high and file sizes grow quickly. Most business documents work well at moderate settings, with higher resolution reserved for small fonts or detailed forms.

Quick Tip: Higher DPI isn't always better. The right balance saves storage and speeds uploads.

Color Modes

Color is useful for marked-up forms, ID cards, or documents with stamps and highlights. Grayscale or black and white create smaller files that are fine for simple text. Choosing the right mode balances clarity with storage and speed.

File Formats

Different formats serve different needs:

- PDF for everyday business documents
- PDF/A for long-term archiving
- High compression PDF to keep file sizes small
- JPEG for photos or image-heavy pages
- TIFF for specialized environments that require lossless quality

Types of Scanning Devices

- **Multifunction printers (MFPs)** handle printing, copying, and scanning in one unit and work well as shared hubs for most offices.
- **ADF scanners** use an Automatic Document Feeder for quick multi-page jobs.
- **Flatbed scanners** are best for fragile, bound, or oddly shaped originals.
- **Portable and specialty scanners** are useful when staff need to scan in the field or capture ID cards and similar items.

Behind the scenes, modern devices add automation and image correction. They straighten pages, remove blank sheets, and adjust brightness automatically. When paired with good software and clear workflows, scanning becomes predictable instead of unpredictable, and documents arrive in your systems ready to use.

Example: A skewed contract that once needed rescan after rescan is now automatically straightened and saved correctly the first time.

Smarter Capture: OCR, Optimization, and Automation

Once a document is scanned, the real value comes from how easily it can be found, shared, and used. Three capabilities make the difference: file optimization, Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and workflow automation.

File Optimization

Optimization tools clean up images and keep file sizes reasonable. They:

- Adjust contrast and brightness for better readability
- Remove background noise from older or wrinkled pages
- Use high compression formats that reduce size while preserving clarity

The result is a document that opens quickly, looks clear on screen, and does not overload storage or email.

OCR: Making Scans Searchable

A raw scan is just a picture of a page. OCR analyzes that image and converts the characters into digital text. With OCR:

- Staff can search for names, dates, or phrases inside documents
- Systems can index content instead of relying only on file names
- Data entry can be reduced or automated for repeatable forms

Searchable documents turn scanning from simple archiving into a way to support faster decisions and easier retrieval.

Did you know? If you've ever scrolled through dozens of scanned files trying to find one paragraph, OCR eliminates that problem.

Workflow Automation

Automation connects scanning to the next steps in your process. Instead of scan, save, rename, move, and notify, a well-designed workflow can:

- Apply standard naming rules
- Send files to the right folder or application
- Trigger notifications or approval steps
- Classify documents by type using layout, barcodes, or keywords

Think of automation as the bridge between paper and the tools your teams already use, such as document management platforms, CRM systems, or line of business applications. When file optimization, OCR, and automation work together, each scan arrives where it belongs, in a format people can trust, without extra manual work.

Cloud-Based Scanning and Modern Workflows

Cloud platforms have changed how organizations store and share information, and scanning has followed the same path. Instead of relying on local PCs and on-premise servers, many devices now send documents directly to cloud applications.

Simpler for Employees

With cloud-based scanning, users can choose a destination such as:

- A shared cloud folder
- A team workspace
- A document management library
- A workflow or case management app

The file goes straight from the device to the cloud. There is no need to email the scan, download it, rename it, and upload it again.



Support for Remote and Hybrid Work

When a document is scanned to a cloud location, it becomes available to everyone with access rights, regardless of where they work. A contract scanned at a branch office or headquarters can be reviewed by a remote employee in minutes, without complex VPN connections or local file transfers.



Less Infrastructure to Maintain

Traditional scanning often depends on shared network drives and on-premise servers. These require monitoring, backups, updates, and troubleshooting. Cloud-connected workflows shift much of that work to the service provider, reducing the load on internal IT teams.



Fewer Technical Roadblocks

Cloud services are designed for broad compatibility. By sending scans directly to these platforms, organizations avoid many of the driver and software issues that appear when older devices interact with aging desktops or servers.



Security and Access Control

Modern cloud platforms include tools for user authentication, encryption in transit and at rest, and detailed permission settings. When scanning workflows take advantage of these features, they support both convenience and control.

Cloud-based scanning shortens the distance between paper documents and the digital tools your business relies on. It helps keep information flowing smoothly, even as teams and offices become more distributed.

Secure Scanning Practices

Every scan that enters your systems carries information you are responsible for protecting. That may include personal data, financial records, health information, or sensitive internal documents. A secure scanning approach protects that information from the moment a page is captured.

Control Who Can Scan and Where Files Can Go

Modern devices support user authentication, such as PIN codes, swipe cards, or network logins. This helps:

- Prevent unauthorized use of the device
- Track who scanned what and when
- Limit access to specific destinations, such as email or external folders

Role-based rules can prevent certain users from sending scans outside the organization or to unsecured locations.

Quick Tip: Authentication reduces misuse and ensures accountability without slowing employees down.

Role-based rules can prevent certain users from sending scans outside the organization or to unsecured locations.

Protect Files While They Travel

Once a document leaves the scanner, it usually moves across a network to a folder, application, or cloud platform. Encryption in transit helps keep that data private. Secure protocols make it far harder for anyone to intercept or read documents during transfer.

Manage Access in Your Digital Systems

Scanning is only one part of the chain. Once the file arrives, it must be stored in systems with:

- Clear permission structures
- Strong password or identity controls
- Policies for who can view, edit, or delete documents

Good access management supports privacy and reduces the risk of accidental exposure.

Use Audit Trails for Accountability

Logs that show who scanned, accessed, or moved a document are valuable for both operations and compliance. They help answer questions, support investigations, and demonstrate control during audits.

Support Regulatory Requirements

Many regulations, such as HIPAA and various state privacy laws, include expectations for electronic documents. Secure scanning practices align with these requirements by combining:

- Authentication at the device
- Encryption during transfer
- Controlled access in storage
- Retention and disposal rules

By designing scanning with security in mind, organizations protect both their data and their reputation while still keeping workflows practical for everyday users.

Building an Efficient Scanning Workflow

Technology alone does not create a smooth process. The way you structure your scanning workflow has just as much impact as the devices you buy.

Standardize Settings and Naming

Agree on a small set of defaults that work for most jobs:

- Typical resolution for office documents
- When to use color versus grayscale
- Preferred file formats
- Naming conventions that include dates, document type, and client or project identifiers

Clear standards mean staff do not need to guess which options to pick.

Use Presets for Common Tasks

Most devices allow you to create presets such as “Invoices to AP folder with OCR” or “HR forms to secure archive.” Presets capture all the needed settings and destinations so users only have to press a button and confirm.

Quick Tip: When the same steps repeat with every scan, a preset can take that work off your team’s plate.

Simplify Destinations

Decide where different document types should land. Common patterns include:

- Department folders
- Project or client folders
- Dedicated intake locations watched by a workflow or document management system

Reduce the number of choices at the device to cut down on mistakes.

Include OCR and Optimization by Default Where Helpful

If staff regularly need to search inside documents or store large volumes of files, make OCR and compression part of the standard workflow. This ensures consistency and avoids one-off setups.

Define Roles and Responsibilities

Clarify who does what:

- Front line staff who scan and send
- Administrative or records teams who verify and file
- Managers or compliance staff who review retention and security

This helps keep documents from getting stuck in inboxes or forgotten on desktops.

Review and Refine Over Time

As your organization changes, your scanning needs will change as well. Occasional reviews can reveal bottlenecks, new automation opportunities, or outdated destinations that no longer make sense.

With a clear workflow in place, scanning becomes a quick step in larger processes instead of a small project every time someone walks up to the device.

Device Spotlight: Ricoh SD Series and Straight-Pass ADF

To see what modern scanning looks like in practice, it helps to look at a real device family. The Ricoh SD Series illustrates how the right hardware design can support faster, more reliable capture in busy workplaces.

Fast, Accurate Single Pass Scanning

The Ricoh SD Series uses a production-class single-pass document feeder that captures both sides of a page in one movement. This supports high image-per-minute speeds for both simplex and duplex jobs. For teams that process large batches of forms, packets, or mixed documents, this speed can significantly shorten turnaround times.

The feeder itself is built on Fujitsu's production-class scanning technology, which is now part of the Ricoh portfolio after Ricoh purchased Fujitsu's scanner division. This gives the SD Series the same robust feeding performance traditionally found in dedicated production scanners.



Straight-Pass ADF for Challenging Originals

Many devices struggle with envelopes, folded sheets, thick cards, or fragile originals. The Straight-Pass Automatic Document Feeder in the SD Series moves documents along a direct paper path. Pages experience fewer bends, which helps:

- Reduce jams
- Protect delicate or irregular items
- Improve the chance of a successful scan on the first attempt

This design is particularly helpful in environments that handle ID cards, mail, receipts, and other non-standard items.

Smart Jam Prevention and Protection

The SD Series includes multiple sensors that scan for problems while pages are moving. Technologies such as sound detection, paper deflection monitoring, and ultrasonic double feed detection help catch issues early. The device can pause the job before a full jam occurs, which protects both the original documents and staff time.

Automatic Correction for Cleaner Files

Even careful users sometimes feed pages at a slight angle or in the wrong orientation. The Ricoh SD Series offers automatic skew correction and intelligent orientation adjustment. The device analyzes each page and straightens or rotates it, so the final file looks consistent and ready to store or share.

User-Friendly and Secure

A large, guided operation panel helps users choose the right settings and preview scans. Authentication options, encryption support, and hardened system design help protect scanned data as it moves into your digital systems.

The Ricoh SD Series brings together strong feeding performance, intelligent correction, and practical security features. For organizations that handle a mix of everyday documents and challenging originals, it shows how the right device can remove friction from scanning and keep work moving steadily.

A Smarter Way to Work With Paper

Even with more of your processes moving online, paper still shows up in everyday work. Forms, contracts, mail, and handwritten notes all need to find their place in your digital systems. When that transition is clear and consistent, your team feels the difference.

Modern scanning helps make that possible. With the right setup, paper becomes just another source of information that moves easily into your workflows. You gain better visibility, fewer delays, and a more dependable way to manage documents as they come in.

If your current scanning process feels clunky, slow, or difficult to maintain, this may be the right time to take another look at how paper moves through your organization.

Want help exploring what improved scanning could look like for your team?

We're here to answer questions, share examples, or walk through options based on how you work today.

We look forward to talking with you!

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About Centriworks

Since 1964, Centriworks has supported organizations across East Tennessee with business technology solutions designed to improve productivity and reduce waste. We help businesses strengthen their document and digital information workflows with advanced hardware, software, and ongoing support. Our commitment to dependable service continues to guide everything we do.

