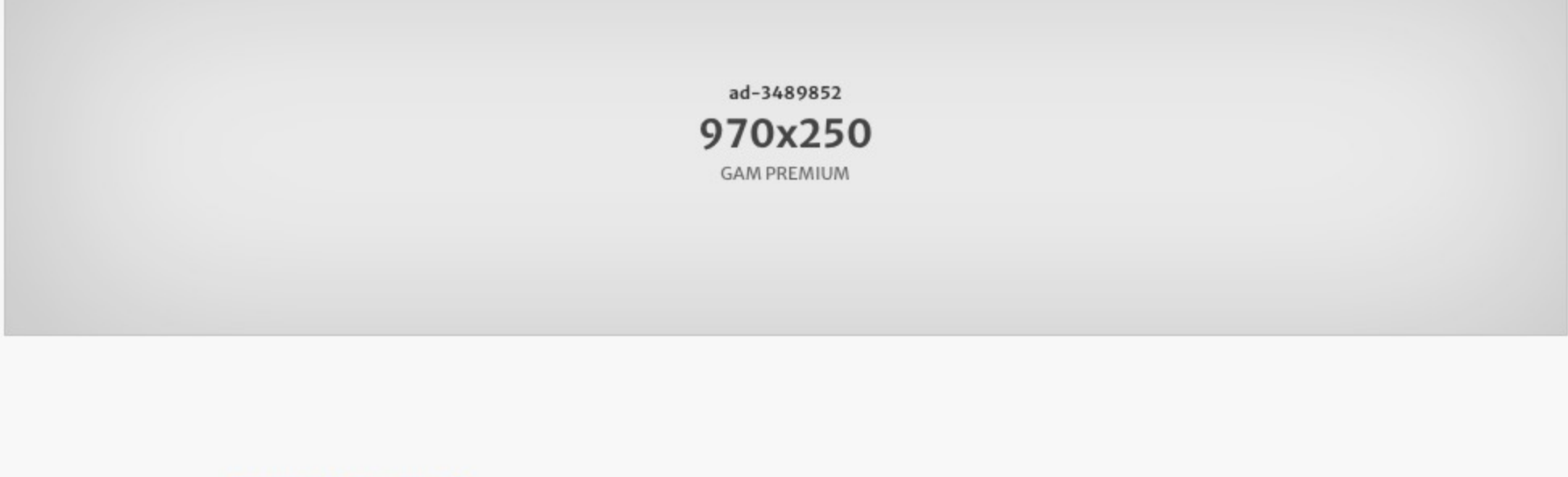


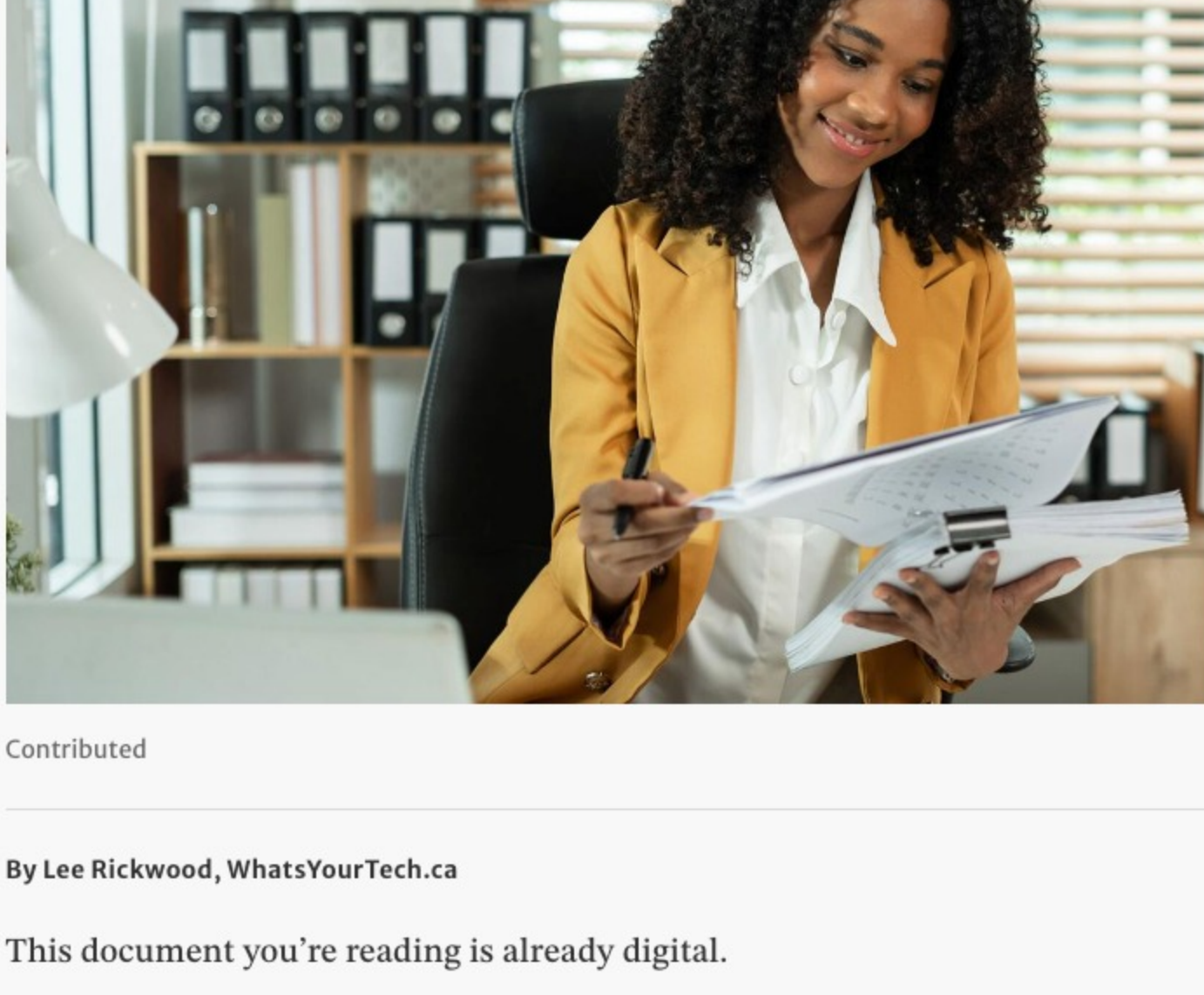


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Gaining business advantage with document digitization

Businesses can reduce costs and boost productivity and profit by going digital, transforming their paper-bound workplace with the best available scanning technologies and digitization services.

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Contributed

By Lee Rickwood, WhatsYourTech.ca

This document you're reading is already digital.

Unlike paper, it can be easily shared, stored, searched and retrieved.

It doesn't need to be scanned and digitized first, the way other documents — such as important company reports, corporate records, and other business materials — do.

Paper may be a necessary requirement or a legacy carry-over to many businesses. In all cases, it can be a big expense and a barrier to productivity.

But there are effective digital solutions to better manage and maintain documentation of all types, and not just pages of paper. From business cards to X-rays and more. Scanning, imaging, and digitizing company documents can save money, increase efficiency and help boost the success of entrepreneurial start-ups, large corporations, and government agencies.

That's what customers at AMS Imaging Inc., one of the leading scanning and imaging bureaus, based in Ottawa, Ontario, have experienced on their digitization journey.

For more than 40 years, AMS Imaging has provided professional and corporate clients and various government departments with comprehensive document scanning and digitization services.

They know that document digitization has become fundamental to new business models, including flex-work trends that do not follow traditional ideas of set hours in a fixed office. Digitization service bureaus like AMS Imaging also help feed important company data into successful new business processes fuelled by artificial intelligence and robotic technologies.

Smaller companies may manage for themselves with an in-house desktop document scanner when simple, small jobs are at hand. Sometimes called the 'day forward' scenario, scanning of basic paper documents takes place as they are produced or received over a normal day's work.

But those businesses and professionals who have tried to tackle more complex or demanding jobs soon realize that digitizing paper records is more time-consuming and effort-intensive than they first thought. Many companies may lack the in-house resources or experience to process thousands, hundreds of thousands or even millions of pages.

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For efficiency and economy on larger jobs, including bulk scanning tasks or archival projects, digitization is best handled by a professional scanning and imaging services bureau, where the needed expertise and advanced technology are available. Back file conversion, referring to the reams of paper a business has accumulated over the years, is a digitization project for the experts.

Scanning bureaus can match a range of digitization solutions to a client's specific requirements, large or small. These experts in scanning, imaging and digitization have the right equipment for the job at hand, be it big volume paper scanning, large format or oversized document digitization, even conversion of microfilm, microfiche and other non-paper formats. Such capabilities can be out of reach for smaller companies. Scanning bureaus also have in place the quality control and assurance practices to ensure all client documents are scanned carefully and captured accurately.

If a paper digitization task lies ahead for your company, you're likely to encounter Ricoh document scanners: from small personal or desktop models in its ScanSnap line-up, right on up to Production level fi-series solutions networked to the cloud..

Many of those products are in service at AMS Imaging. The company has always embraced new and advanced technologies and there's an experienced team of skilled digitization professionals who deliver high-quality, cost-effective data digitization services using the best equipment available.

In fact, as AMS Imaging Chief Operating Officer Paul Larkin describes, the company recently upgraded its facility and converted to Ricoh scanners.

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It was not a hard decision, he said. "Ricoh provides the high-speed functionality we require and the reliability we depend on for our business."

Cutting-edge Ricoh technology, combined with ever-increasing capabilities of its many document scanning software tools now powered by artificial intelligence as Larkin points out, lets AMS Imaging provide clients with accurate and reliable digitized documents in a timely and cost-effective manner. "AI is becoming more involved," Larkin explains, bringing new capabilities for determining the types of documents being scanned, which scanners best handle the different types, and what quality assurance processes result in the best final outputs.

One of the most capable Ricoh scanners is the new fi-8950 production scanner, a top-of-the-line enterprise model that can scan up to 150 pages per minute even as it optimizes every one.

Launched earlier this year, the fi-8950 colour scanner incorporates a proprietary Clear Image Capture (CIC) technology to deliver the best detail and accurate colour performance. The scanner's high-capacity 750-sheet hopper comes with feed options for diverse document types, and it's equipped with new functions never seen in a scanner before: Automatic Skew Correction and Stapled Documents Detection, which help prevent paper jams and damage to documents, even when different documents are scanned in bulk.

That's a big advantage for scanning bureaus like AMS Imaging, which must deliver high-quality, high-volume digitization services to all its clients, all the time. Paper jams are very expensive especially in a production environment. If a device scans at 150 pages per minute and it jams, clearing that jam and resuming the scan may cost 300 pages or more in productivity time. If the documents to be scanned are damaged in a jam, the cost is even greater.

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Ricoh's production scanners have reliability features to reduce the number of cleanings required (another potential delay to production activity, often caused by dusty old documents that have been stored far too long) as well as to simplify the cleaning process when needed, such as opening wide and giving illuminated access to the rollers, which themselves are made of materials that resist dust build-up.

As Larkin mentioned, Ricoh scanners also have powerful software tools that his team uses to optimize the scanning process and improve image quality, such as PaperStream IP with its optimal image correction that can be used to remove any paper textures, speckling, or stains.

Just like a paper jam, having to re-scan a page interrupts workflow and lowers productivity. AMS Imaging uses PaperStream IP to get clean, detailed images on the first pass, even providing operators with thumbnails of scanned images which can be previewed and selected for the best image quality.

A service bureau like AMS Imaging certainly takes full advantage of the best hardware and software to provide top scanning and digitization services, but it also relies on its team of experienced, knowledgeable scanning technicians to keep its service workflows organized, productive and profitable.

"We know what to do," said Larkin. "We know how to prepare documents for scanning, how to ensure accurate document capture, and how to deliver the best quality images so a client has all the data they need, safely archived and easily accessible. There are no additional processes required after our main QC. The equipment and the processes we have here are reliable and productive."

With Ricoh's high-capacity production scanners handling the bulk of its paper digitization activities (there are dedicated devices for microfilm and microfiche), AMS Imaging uses the fi series as its everyday workhorses, so they can handle "the boxes and boxes and boxes" of documents that Larkin and his team regularly receive from clients in many different industries.

"One of the biggest reasons they come to us is to get access to their data and information; we can digitize all their documents and make the files available for everyone that needs them," he said.

Being able to share important information quickly and easily among co-workers is crucial to business success, Larkin adds, especially now when many staffers may not be in a central office but working from home or on the road. Digital documents can be searched quickly and shared easily via email attachment or a cloud-based document system. Digital documents are not only accessed more easily, but they are also shared more securely using digital locks and passwords.

Transforming paper documents into digital files means information won't be lost or get bottlenecked by a single user — there is always digital access to the original content for everyone on the team to work with as or when they need, no matter where they are, no matter what industry they're in.

AMS Imaging has supported many organizations on their digitization journey. It works with all levels of government, as well as finance, law, insurance, transportation, mining, healthcare, manufacturing, law enforcement, education, and more.

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Larkin laughs as he tries to list them all. "I'm probably forgetting a few. If they generate a lot of paper, then it's a good fit for us."

And a good candidate to realize the benefits of document digitization.

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