10 Questions To Ask Your
Document Scanning Vendor

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About The Author

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With a focus on organisations in the Commercial and Retail sectors, Tim's expertise lies in devising the perfect blend of consultancy, technology and outsourcing that delivers the best value for his customers.

As well as founding and managing his own business, Tim's extensive industry experience, spanning a 15+ year period, includes working with some of the country's most high profile organisations and taking them on a journey of digital transformation with a major focus on de-risking, enhancing compliance and improving performance.

"Ultimately, Document Scanning is the foundation to your digital transformation journey and helps you to bridge the gap between your current position and a more modern, agile future; a future in which you have the time, space and money to proactively drive growth."

Introduction

For large organisations, there are clear advantages to scanning hard-copy documentation; to free-up floor space, the ease of locating documents, improved compliance, risk mitigation as well as the ability for allowing multiple people to access a document simultaneously.

However, before these benefits can be realised, you'll need to know how to identify a document scanning vendor who can effectively handle and safely process your document scanning requirements, from compliance to organisational.

We've put together this useful guide for you of the 10 key questions that you should ask your document scanning vendor in order to understand their capabilities, technologies and processes to ensure they are suitable to manage your projects going forward.

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(Q1)

What is the typical turnaround time for bulk scanning projects?

A capable information management vendor should be able to provide fast and reliable turnaround times for large scanning projects. Look for a supplier with a monthly capacity that exceeds 50m images per month - as a larger capacity will accommodate higher volume, bulk scanning projects, which is especially helpful for companies with multiple office locations or decentralised teams, such as in healthcare. Some organisations will offer you a scan-on-demand service with typical SLA's of between 1-3 hours. Scan-on-demand is a way of making your documents available to you throughout your digitisation project. At any point, if you require urgent access to a specific file or record being processed offsite, you could request a scan-on-demand and that file would be tracked, identified and processed urgently with the digital version being made available to you within 1-3 hours from the time of your request. This is particularly beneficial if you require regular access to your records at all times.

This question is crucial if you are in need of a fast turnaround on your scanning project. Look for a supplier who can provide evidence and case studies of companies they have helped, especially some larger and more high profile conversion projects, such as those converting hundreds of millions of pages a year for clients. Ask them about their high-quality IBML scanning devices. These devices are top of the range and should be maintained in-house by the supplier - providing a better capability, resilience, the ability to scale rapidly, and business continuity.

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Q2

How can we be sure our documents/records are safe in transit when they leave our premises?

With GDPR in effect, organisations must be vigilant in keeping data protected at all times. This includes when they leave the premises and are in transit to be scanned and stored. The availability of an online tracker system for visibility of any records in transit, from collection at your premises to arrival at the scanning vendor's facilities, is one of the safest ways to ensure your documents' are safe. This tracker will also assist with the management and control of individual records meaning that you can track specific files at any point during the document scanning process. In addition, your supplier should be able to demonstrate that they use their own fleet of GPS tracked vehicles for the physical collection and delivery of your records.

Q3

How can we be sure of the confidentiality of our records? Are processing staff vetted?

For financial and medical organisations, confidentiality is of the utmost importance as they need to be compliant with a number of different regulations such as GDPR. Your supplier should understand the significance of this and undertake strict vetting of staff that complies with the likes of the Department of Health Records Management NHS Code of Practice. Ask them for evidence of whether all employees sign a confidentiality agreement, an 'Acceptable Use' policy and undergo DBS checks - which should all be a part of their standard terms and conditions of employment.

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(Q4)

What quality and security standards should a vendor demonstrate?

As a minimum, your supplier's scanning processes should be fully compliant with:

- ✅ Quality management systems **[ISO 9001]**
- ✅ Information security management **[ISO 27001]**

If the supplier cannot demonstrate evidence of this compliance, then this should raise some serious red flags and concerns over their commitment to the safety and security of your data.

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(Q5)

What happens to our paper records once they have been scanned?

For the majority of document scanning vendors, post-scanning, they should retain your original records in a highly secure storage facility for an agreed period of time. Typically this is for a period of 90 days post-scan to allow enough time for you to conduct your own quality checks. You will then be asked to authorise the destruction of scanned documentation, unless the originals are required for legal and compliance purposes, in which case they can go into archive for the required amount of time or be returned to you. If the hard-copy is destroyed, this should be processed on site, within a secure facility.

As best practice, the vendor's destruction processes and facilities should conform to;
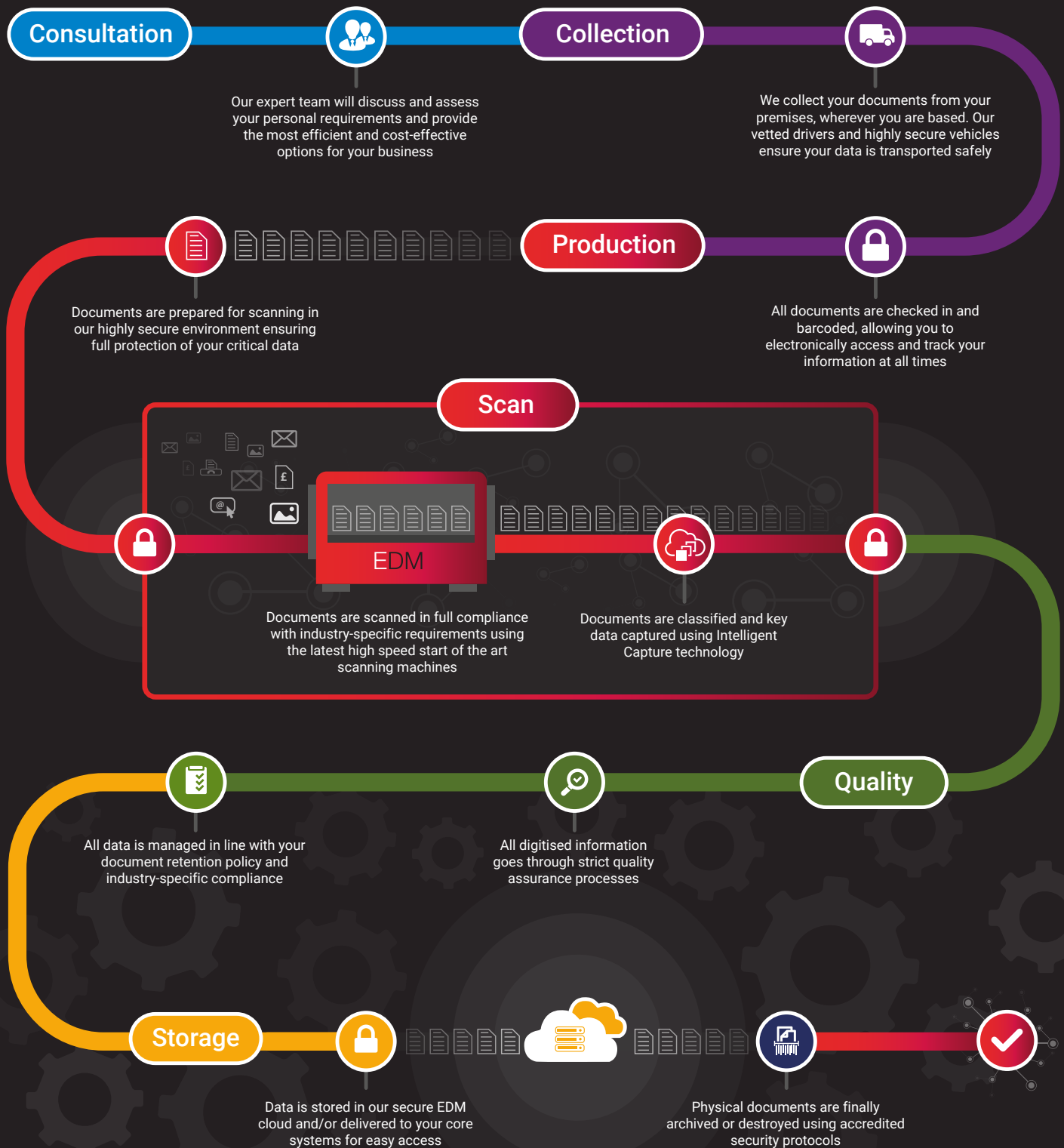
- ⊘ ISO9001: Quality Management
- ⊘ ISO14001: Environmental Management
- ⊘ ISO27001: Information Security
- ⊘ PCI-DSS Version 3 Level 1 certification for the storage, handling and destruction of hard copy documentation

Electronic destruction certificates should then be provided upon the completion of any destruction projects. Destruction should only be undertaken upon receipt of approval from you, the client.

You can find out more about EDM's own document scanning process in this useful infographic.

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The Document Scanning Process

Consultation
Our expert team will discuss and assess your personal requirements and provide the most efficient and cost-effective options for your business

Collection
We collect your documents from your premises, wherever you are based. Our vetted drivers and highly secure vehicles ensure your data is transported safely

Production
All documents are checked in and barcoded, allowing you to electronically access and track your information at all times

Documents are prepared for scanning in our highly secure environment ensuring full protection of your critical data

Scan
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Documents are scanned in full compliance with industry-specific requirements using the latest high speed start of the art scanning machines

Documents are classified and key data captured using Intelligent Capture technology

Quality
All digitised information goes through strict quality assurance processes

All data is managed in line with your document retention policy and industry-specific compliance

Storage
Data is stored in our secure EDM cloud and/or delivered to your core systems for easy access

Physical documents are finally archived or destroyed using accredited security protocols

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(Q6)

Can data capture from my documents be automated?
If so, by how much?

Automating data capture during the document scanning process can cut down on processing times.

Ask your vendor if they have an 'Intelligent Capture Waterfall' approach, which uses a blend of technologies to capture data from your documents as accurately and efficiently as possible.

For example, our experienced and professional scanning vendors will utilise high-speed, high-volume IBML scanners and with hardware of this standard, it is possible to build in barcode reading and optical character recognition (OCR) automation technology, which means that a high proportion of your data can be captured 'on the fly' during the scanning process.

Ask your supplier about their automated data capture rate, this should be more than 90-95% with any remaining data capture being handled by trained indexing staff.

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What document formats are supported?

As your documents will vary in format, you need to find a supplier who can support a number of formats. Scanned paper documents (as well as microfilm and microfiche) are typically stored as PDF or TIFF files (either black and white or colour, depending on the nature of the documents and your needs).

Other file types your supplier should be able to support are:

- Image formats - including JPEG, BMP, GIF and PNG
- Microsoft Office - Word, Excel, Powerpoint etc.
- Text-based formats - TXT, XML
- CAD formats
- Email - either whole MSG files or separate message body and attachments
- Sound files - such as MP3

"

"EDM is highly experienced in large-volume data migrations and ongoing ingestion from existing systems. Therefore, you can be confident that whether you have existing electronic repositories, or a requirement to take ongoing data exports from your existing systems, we will be able to securely handle and store your data whatever its format."

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Q8

How do I receive my newly scanned images?

There are various ways a document scanning vendor can provide you with your newly scanned images. The main methods are as follows;

Encrypted hard-drive

For larger projects, some organisations will opt to receive their scanned documents and data on an encrypted hard-drive. This makes it very quick for them to access their new images without too much reliance on their own IT resources. However this is a one-off data transfer and you will need to wait until project completion to receive your images.

Secure FTP link

This is a popular method to receive scanned images as it allows for secure and frequent transfer of images and data, throughout a scanning project. Your IT team would need to be involved in this process and as with all of the transfer methods mentioned here, you will need to have the server space to ingest and host your scanned images.

Hosted solution

An online digital filing repository or document management system, is a securely hosted, fully managed and supported environment for your digital files without you requiring storage hardware and software on your premises. Images can be uploaded during the scanning process without a reliance on your IT team. A hosted solution can also assist you with data compliance (for example GDPR) and risk management, providing managed retention policies, document-level encryption, a permission-based security model for access control as well as having all user interaction with documents fully audited and reportable.

EDM Online

EDM Online is a fully hosted digital filing repository, and many high profile organisations choose our hosted platform to store and retrieve their scanned images. The EDM Online user interface is designed to be intuitive and easily used by non-technical staff. EDM Online can wrap around legacy systems without the expense of replacing them resulting in a seamless experience for your data handlers. Find out more about the benefits of choosing EDM for your document scanning requirements and **request a free quote today**.

Q9

How can scanning documents help us comply with our regulatory requirements?

A key starting point is to have a clearly defined **retention policy**, broken down by document type, that is understood and easily available within your business.

Additionally, knowing how long documents need to be retained and having a process for destroying documents once they pass this date is not only best practice from a regulatory standpoint - but also reduces risk and cost from storing documents you no longer need.

Scanning your documents gives you the opportunity to review and apply retention to your digitised records.

The advantage to having your images made available to you through an online hosted filing system is that each document has unique metadata (for identification and fast retrieval) making it possible to apply the correct retention period to the document based on your company's retention guidelines as it enters the system. This process can also be automated removing the need to rely on staff manually and correctly applying retention rules. As such, this allows for secure, fast access to your documents, whilst ensuring decisions can be made on what documents can be securely destroyed - all within a fully auditable environment.

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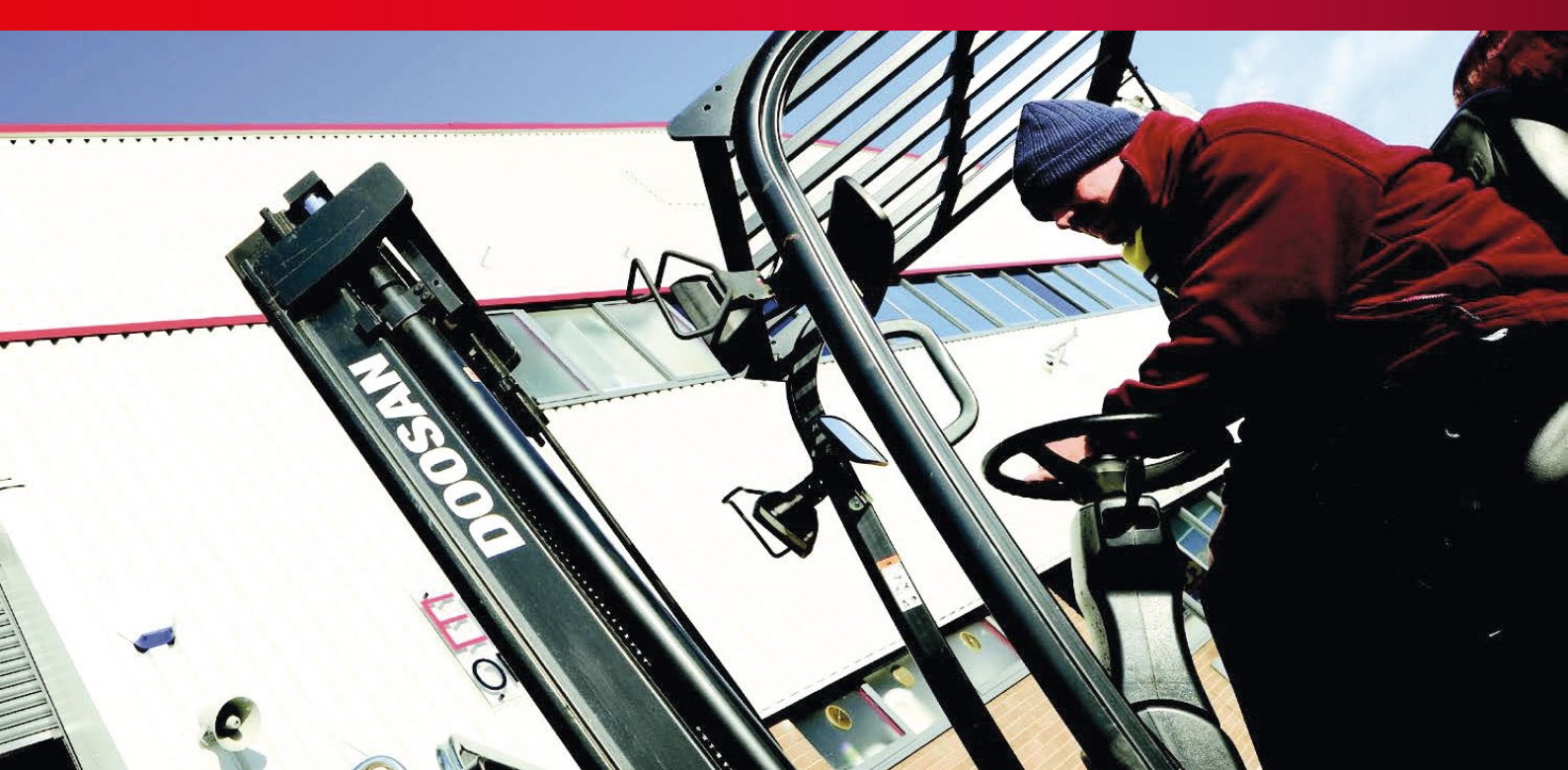
(Q10)

What level of support can I expect throughout the scanning project?

The digitisation of your documents is a significant undertaking, but what happens next? You'll need a supplier who can support you before, during and after this process, with a key account management programme.

You should expect the following:

- To be assigned a named account manager who will work with you during diarised monthly and quarterly reviews, ultimately to understand your organisations digital transformation strategy.
- Meaningful insights, keep you up-to-date with the latest technological advancements - helping you to build knowledge and understand what is possible and stay ahead of your competitors.

Ultimately, this kind of account management will help to accelerate your results by driving value with the utmost integrity and compliance.

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Conclusion

Understanding how your document scanning vendor is able to meet your regulatory and organisational requirements is vital. These 10 questions are key to this and help you gauge the relationship that your business, its confidential data and your document scanning vendor will have during the whole process.

Why Choose EDM?

EDM has a proven track record of delivering high profile and high volume document digitisation projects within short timeframes and to a high standard.

We work with large organisations across the financial, health, insurance and retail sectors processing millions of highly confidential documents for them every month, to an extremely high standard and with strict SLA's.

Do you have an active project?

If you do, you may find these resources useful;

Scanning
Animation
Video

RM Results
Case Study

Document
Scanning Process
Infographic

Looking for a quote?

Request a document scanning quote here

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