

INSTALLATION PROFILE

Technology User: Piedmont Hospital (Atlanta) is a 600-bed hospital with its business office 12 miles off-campus. It uses a document management solution from an ASP (application service provider) for its back end documents like correspondence, remittances, and payment posting.

Problem: Piedmont made copies of patients' insurance and identification documents at registration, keeping the photocopy in the medical file within the hospital. The information was keyed into the database at a later time. The business office would file an insurance claim based on the information in the medical file. If a claim was rejected or denied, Piedmont had to call the patient to verify that the information in the hospital's database was correct.

Solution: The hospital integrated 2"x2.5"x11" Strobe XP 200 scanners from Visioneer (Pleasanton, CA) into its document management system to create an image of the insurance and identification cards at the point of entry. The images are auto-indexed into the hospital's database, accessible by any authorized user. Piedmont's business office can now access the original image to verify a claim's information, and registration time has been reduced.

Front End Scanning Streamlines Insurance Claim Verification

Piedmont Hospital adds scanning to its front end registration process to create an image of original insurance documents that can be accessed from its back end offices.

While the benefits of high-volume scanning in healthcare environments are rather accepted, one doesn't leap to appreciate what small, low-volume scanners can do. But

Piedmont Hospital (Atlanta) realized the time savings of scanning vital documents at the very front end with those small scanners.

Piedmont Hospital runs two hospitals totaling 600 beds, and its billing and financial services are located about 12 miles from the main hospital campus. The hospital uses an electronic document management system from Third Millennium Healthcare Systems (Decatur, GA), a niche ASP (application service provider), to manage its back office documents (correspondences, remittances, payments).

Like most hospitals, when a patient is admitted (through emergency, inpatient, or outpatient services) the registration staff makes a copy of the patient's driver's license and insurance card to put with the file. At a later point, the insurance information is keyed into the hospital's database and the copy of the original is kept for verification purposes. The need for verification usually occurs in the billing part of the process, when the hospital files claims and bills insurance companies. According to Foster North, president and COO of Third Millennium, 20% of insurance claims sent by hospitals are rejected or denied by the insurance company. When a claim is rejected, it means the insurance company needs additional information or documentation before it will pay; denial means the claim won't be paid. "90% of the time a claim is rejected or denied, it is because of a mistake at the hospital," North states. "That usually happens because someone keyed in a policy number or street address incorrectly."

In Piedmont Hospital's case, should a claim be denied or rejected, the first thing it does is compare the insurance information on file to the copy of the original. But, since Piedmont's Patient Financial Services is off-campus, the photocopy of the card is, too. "We had to call the patient at home or work, and get the card's information to double check our files," says Rick Childs, director of Patient Financial Services at Piedmont. "It would sometimes take some time to track down the patient, which delayed the claim. And that isn't very good for our PR."

Ask Your ASP About Front End Scanning

The solution to Piedmont's problem came about from a discussion Childs had with Third Millennium. The ASP was checking up on Piedmont's service, and Childs told it that his office needed the ability to see the hard copy of the insurance card. "We never see the copy in the business office, but we're the ones that need it," Childs explains. "I told Third Millennium that we were looking to get imaging at the front end, to capture the identification and insurance documents, and to get the images into the system." As it turned out, Third Millennium was in the process of developing a solution for front end scanning, and with input from Piedmont, developed software to integrate with Piedmont's existing document management system from the ASP.

Footprint, Document Thickness Factors In Choosing Scanners

Since the front end scanning would be done in registration, Piedmont put a lot of thought into the scanners it could use. "In registration, the biggest challenge is space," says Childs. "There's a desk, with a monitor and keyboard, and there isn't room for much else.

We needed a scanner with a very small footprint, but that was still efficient in scanning quality and speed.” With advice from Third Millennium, Piedmont installed Strobe XP 200 scanners from Visioneer (Pleasanton, CA), a 2”x2.5”x11” scanner. “In some cases our registrars’ desks were so tight for space that we had to put the scanner on top of their monitors,” Childs says.

The Strobe scanners also accommodated the documents that would be scanned: insurance cards and driver’s licenses. “The scanner also needed to be able to handle the thickness of credit-card-like documents quickly,” Childs explains. “We were streamlining our verification process, but more than anything, we didn’t want to add time to the registration processes.”

Index Images As They’re Scanned

Because Piedmont already used Third Millennium’s indexing system for its back end correspondence and remittances, as well as payment posting, integrating the front end scanning software was simple. Piedmont created a screen scraping capability within the application so that the data from the scanned image would be auto-indexed by 6-8 indices like name, address, social security number, and/or medical record number. “This way, if any authorized hospital employee needs to access the image, the employee can pull it up right on their computer by any of those indices,” says Childs.

By scanning the insurance and identification documents at the front end and creating an accessible-from-anywhere image, Piedmont has reduced its registration time. Rather than

getting up, going to a photo copy machine, making the copy, and coming back, registrars can scan the images from their seats, while still remaining in contact with the patient.

“We’re talking about seconds here, but when you’re registering 1000 patients a day, 5-10 seconds adds up,” Childs says.

In Piedmont’s Patient Financial Services office, if an insurance claim comes back denied, employees can access the original document image to verify the information. “We can immediately see where an error may have occurred,” Childs says. “We don’t have to track down the patient, going through some agitation to get that number again because it is wrong in our data.”