AIIM Market Intelligence

Delivering the priorities and opinions of AIIM's 193,000 community

Paper Free
- Are we there yet?

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Process Used and Survey Demographics

While we appreciate the support of these sponsors, we also greatly value our objectivity and independence as a non-profit industry association. The results of the survey and the market commentary made in this report are independent of any bias from the vendor community.

The survey was taken using a web-based tool collecting responses from 199 individual members of the AIIM community during the month of August 2016. Invitations to take the survey were sent via e-mail to a selection of the 193,000+ AIIM community members and through various social media outlets. Survey demographics can be found in Appendix 1.

About AIIM

AIIM has been an advocate and supporter of information professionals for over 70 years. The association mission is to ensure that information professionals understand the current and future challenges of managing information assets in an era of social, mobile, cloud and big data. AIIM builds on a strong heritage of research and member service. Today, AIIM is a global, non-profit organization that provides independent research, education and certification programs to information professionals. AIIM represents the entire information management community: practitioners, technology suppliers, integrators and consultants.

— Bob Larrivee
Vice President and Chief Analyst of Market Intelligence, AIIM

About the author

Bob Larrivee is Vice President and Chief Analyst of Market Intelligence at AIIM, and an internationally recognized subject matter expert and thought leader with over thirty years of experience in the fields of information and process management. Bob is an avid techie with a focus on process improvement, and the application of advanced technologies to enhance and automate business operations.

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Introduction

Since the 1980s, we have been hearing about paper-free businesses and the drive to move toward a more digital workplace. At the time, the technology and people were not ready for this transformation. Today, the approach to digitally transform businesses has shifted from a technology first perspective to a more business centric approach, with paper-free processes becoming a focal point and opportunity for many organizations.

Yet despite widespread acceptance that reducing and removing paper is a best practice, we find that only twenty-five percent of our 2016 respondents indicate they run a clear/paper-free environment; the good news is that this figure is up from 18% in last year's report. Discouragingly, 65% of our respondents say they are still signing on paper, even though there is wide and growing acceptance of digital and eSignature technology. Despite this, and the fact that paper is still a somewhat dominant media in business, we see a 3% increase over the 2015 report, with 40% of our 2016 respondents indicating they have a number of paper-free processes and will do more in the future.

It is obvious that while interest and motivation toward a paper-free business environment is increasing, there is still a long road ahead. The human factor is still the primary reason for paper use in handling, reading, and note taking (47%). While benefits are acknowledged, and interest seems to be growing, there is still a lack of management initiatives to move away from paper (47%). Our respondents also cite a lack of understanding and awareness when it comes to paper-free options (39%), indicating a need for education on how to approach and initiate a paper-free project.

In this comprehensive report, we take an in-depth look at the amount of paper in the office, the impediments to removing it, the take up of digital mailrooms and multi-channel capture, and the increasing exploitation of mobile and cloud. Above all, we look at the progress towards paper-free processes, the triggers and decision-making processes, and the issues, benefits and ROI.

Key Findings

In General

- **Twenty-five percent of 2016 respondents indicate they run a clear/paper-free environment; up from 18% in last year's report.** 65% say they are still signing on paper.
- **Forty-three percent of respondents say paper is decreasing in their organizations somewhat (35%) or rapidly (8%).** 35% say it is stable.
- **A three percent increase is seen over the 2015 report, as forty-percent of 2016 respondents indicate they have a number of paper-free processes and will do more.** 14% say they are actively looking at every process.

Capture

- **Paper in Human Resources (HR) is decreasing in the areas of recruitment (49%) and employee lifecycle (48%).** For 41% it is decreasing in Accounts Payables (AP) and Accounts Receivables (39%).
- **The greatest paper reductions are seen in records management by 39% of our respondents, with 34% citing AP – invoice processing.** For 27% the greatest reduction is seen with technical documents.
- **The human factor is still the primary reason for paper use for handling, reading, and note taking (47%), along with a lack of management initiatives to move away from paper (47%).** Our respondents also cite a lack of understanding and awareness when it comes to paper-free options (39%).
- **Fifty-six percent of respondents are looking to automate manual processes with document classification.** For 30%, there is a move to upgrade their technology.

Inbound Content

- **The amount of paper arriving at the door is decreasing somewhat (41%) to rapidly (9%).** Digital inbound documents are increasing somewhat (47%) to rapidly (19%).
- **Demand for paperless communications is somewhat on the rise for 46% of respondents while 19% are seeing a rapid increase in demand.** Thirty-eight percent of respondents say that they now receive more digital invoices than those in paper form.

Digital Mailroom

- **Fourteen percent of respondents have a distributed, multi-channel approach across paper and digital content – up slightly over 2015.** For 29%, things are adhoc in relation to scanning, which is down slightly over 2015.
- **A hybrid approach of centralized and distributed capture is in place for 29% of respondents.** 18% cite use of centralized capture with multiple desktop scanners, and an additional 18% cite use of distributed capture at their branch offices.
- **Forty-one percent of respondents report better quality in downstream data capture and faster-post-box to in-box times equally.** For 37% there are equally fewer operational staff and faster turnaround times for customers.

Processes

- **Responsibility for radical process review falls on the line-of-business or department head according to 26% of our respondents.** It is the top-level executive who is responsible for radical process review in 22% of respondent organizations.
- **When it comes to converting key business processes, Accounts Payables (AP) is the top priority according to 30% of respondents.** For 27% it is Accounts Receivables (AR) and Records Management—cited equally.
- **Dedicated workflow/BPM capabilities are in place for 7% of our respondents – up slightly over 2015.** 36% of respondents say they have a combination of paper and digital content in the same workflows.

Triggers

- **Mandates from above are the motivating trigger for the first paper-free process according to 48% of respondents.** 35% are citing cost savings as the initial trigger for their first paper-free process.
- **When it comes to additional initiatives to eliminate paper from business processes, respondents cite regular process reviews, and cost savings equally (50%).** Improved responsiveness falls next for 42% of respondents.

Mobile

- **Mobile is seen as important and in the planning stages for 32% of our respondents.** Thirty-three percent of respondents say they support AP with mobile capture apps.
- **The most popular content to capture are images for use as records (28%).** Twenty-three percent say they use portable devices to capture documents as images only.
- **Twenty-three percent of respondents indicate they use process specific mobile apps.** Twenty-seven percent say they are using an ECM supported platform.
- **Biggest mobile capture benefit cited by 44% of respondents is the speed of data availability.** Thirty-three percent say the biggest issue is bandwidth and security equally.

Cloud

- **Forty-three percent of respondents say removal of paper from processes should be a constant objective.** Eighteen percent of respondents say they are trying to understand and strategically place cloud use.
- **When it comes to outsourced services, 40% of respondents say they plan to use more document process/data capture beyond scanning.** Fifty-four percent of respondents envision more of a hybrid cloud and on-premise deployment.

Opinions and Spend

- **Fifty percent of respondents say they will spend more on workflow and BPM.** Forty percent of respondents plan to spend more on electronic forms and data capture applications.
- **When it comes to purchasing preferences, 48% will turn towards a vendor direct purchase.** Sixteen percent of respondents will turn to a Systems Integrator or Value Added Reseller (15%).
- **Key lessons learned are having executive level buy-in (42%) and stakeholder involvement (33%).** Key benefits identified are faster customer response (50%), and staff reductions with higher productivity (42%).
- **Measurements used by our respondents are benefits to the business (46%), and process cycle times (36%).** Payback is possible within 3 months according to 9% of respondents, while 36% indicate payback between 3 and 6 months.

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