



TECHREVIEW



by Mary Dum

The Fax of Tomorrow

Are faxes the **hot new tool** for reducing paper?

FOR THE PAST YEAR OR SO MY TECHNOLOGY REVIEWS for this magazine have been mostly about cutting-edge paperless applications. Some are so new that they are used by only a few clients. I enjoy looking into new things and I hope my readers do, too, but sometimes we need to come down to earth and look at new twists for older technology.

Still, when I was asked to review a fax product, my first thought was FAX? Is that worth talking about? Isn't it too old, too tired, too ordinary for a review? Isn't everyone trying to get rid of the fax and replace it with all the paperless applications we hear so much about?

The answer is "no".

A little research showed me that facsimile transmissions are not only alive and well but flourishing in real-estate finance. Maybe later we will have the universal connectivity, the speed and other resources to



go truly paperless, and maybe it can be cost effective, but we certainly have not gotten rid of all the old tools today. For efficiency in a paperless solution, every part of the communication chain should be paperless.

That is far from true today and it is not within the power of any single group to make it happen. So faxes remain with us on into the 21st century.

That doesn't mean you have to move paper around as if you were working with your grandfather's fax machines, as I learned by looking into FaxCore and talking with Paul Banco, president of CiBan.

CiBan is the company that delivers the FaxCore product. The company is a technology solution provider working in the small- and medium-sized business market. It provides technology to automate business processes to manage customer and partner relationships.

CiBan has more than 15 years experi-

ence delivering technology to the small- to medium-business market serving financial institutions, food services and local government municipalities.

FaxCore is a provider of fax server automation for enterprise organizations and the only major fax solution built natively for Microsoft's .NET platform. No ActiveX or Java components are required.

FaxCore is a high performance engine designed to track, document, manage and deliver fax traffic. The company has more than 15 years experience in fax server technology and FaxCore 4370 delivers a Web-based interface and a centralized system that can automate fax communication.

FaxCore's document server can improve workflow, both in data and process, and includes strong archiving and routing functions. The system uses Brooktrout's intelligent fax boards TR1054 and TR114.

In order to implement the FaxCore solution, CiBan technicians ask the potential customer a number of questions such as: Does the customer have multiple branches? How many fax machines does the customer use?

For example, one customer has 65 units and requires an audit trail. How many of those people use those fax machines?

In most businesses several people use one machine at different times, which may lead to personnel problems. Who left this in the input tray, or in the output tray? What happened to the fax I was expecting to receive? Who clears a jam? Don't tell me there is never a jam.

Also, who handles minor maintenance tasks and is someone always available for that? Those are the constant annoyances of office life that can be eliminated with an automated fax system.

One problem in the mortgage industry is the number of pages in a typical fax – which averages more than for many industries.

While many businesses occasionally send large faxes, the mortgage industry sends many medium-sized documents and a few really large ones. And when using a typical fax machine, big is usually bad.

Those are problems of the individual fax station. But in a better world, how should faxes move around the system – what is the optimum workflow? Who needs to know what, and do they need to receive a fax or just know where it is so they can access it as needed? What happens when a fax that is sent is not received?

What happens if a fax is incomplete? And how are faxes archived and security maintained? What records are kept and who has access to their administration?

FaxCore gives users a number of integration points that allow integration with all kinds of back office applications, for example:

The FaxCore E-Mail Gateway provides

e-mail-to-fax functionality by directly sending everything to the FaxCore SMTP server or by integrating with Exchange, Lotus Notes and other mail servers.

FaxCore File Gateway allows the dropping of files into directories. It supports PCL, embedded codes and other file formats. FaxCore Notification Templates help administrators create templates for delivering fax status notification to a third party by HTTP, FTP, e-mail, fax or Web services. External User Authentication allows FaxCore user passwords to be authenticated by external directory services and security providers.

Directory Synchronization synchronizes FaxCore users with others in third-party directories and makes it easy for FaxCore administrators to add and maintain FaxCore users and permission via their external directories and databases.

FaxCore's user interface lets users view all fax transmission details and useful statistics. Faxes that have been received can be viewed in a browser, printed, forwarded to e-mail and fax addresses and saved as PDF files. To send a fax, the user simply prints to the FaxCore printer with the opportunity to enter addresses on the fly or from a FaxCore address book.

FaxCore's tracking system is modeled after browser-based tracking systems used by shipping companies. Incoming and outgoing faxes are tracked before, during and after transmission, with arrival confirmation, time of delivery, undeliverable notification, alternate fax numbers and transmission replay. The billing attributes of every transmission show what the phone company is billing for fax traffic.

In a conference call and demo, I talked

with Paul Banco and Bill Vulpis, president of Main Street Funding Corp. Main Street Funding has a strong reputation as a mortgage brokerage firm serving the lending needs of homebuyers, real estate professionals and builders throughout New Jersey and New York. They are a full-service mortgage broker supported by a staff experienced in every area of mortgage lending: purchase, refinance and construction lending. Mr. Banco ran the FaxCore demo and explained the technology. Mr. Vulpis described how it works in his organization.

Mr. Banco said, "Main Street Funding needed a solution to automate their incoming and outgoing fax transmissions and reduce the costs. Once we deployed FaxCore, they were able to move all types of documents around their three office locations and improve the level of service in delivering mortgages and other financing to customers."

Mr. Vulpis described the hassle of preparing and sending faxes the old way. "Before FaxCore, we were manually sending faxes via traditional fax machines which was a slow and costly process. Our business is very fax-intensive and with FaxCore we are now sending multiple faxes to multiple recipients in seconds through Microsoft Outlook.

"Incoming faxes are archived on the FaxCore server and available to employees at our offices in New York and New Jersey," he noted. "This has eliminated a lot of paper and as a result, our processes and workflow have been improved considerably."

So if you really want to eliminate paper from your processes, this high-performance fax system can be your ally. **MT**



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