

SUMMARY

After extensive comparison, Parker-Lowe & Associates finds only Lexmark hardware and development tools provide the power to create total document workflow solutions.

Systems integrator builds custom workflow solutions with Lexmark multifunction devices and document management development software

The Organization

Based on the North Carolina barrier island of Ocracoke, reachable only by ferry boat, systems integrator Parker-Lowe & Associates specializes in the development and deployment of document imaging and management solutions for government agencies and private-sector corporations throughout the state. Specializing in solutions for Land Records and Register of Deeds offices, the company's aptly named RODAP (Register of Deeds Automation Product) scans, prints, faxes, indexes, stores, retrieves, and e-mails high-quality document images that are fully despeckled, straightened, intensified and de-noised. RODAP is widely used by county registers of deeds, lawyers, health departments, social services agencies, and tax assessors, as well as medical records management and insurance companies.

The Challenge

Even in a soft real estate market, the number of properties sold – and the paperwork that accompanies each transaction – far outstrips the levels of just a few years ago. In 2006, existing U.S. homes sold topped 6.4 million, according to the National Association of Realtors. New homes sold in 2006 exceeded one million, according to the U.S. Dept. of Commerce. Add in a half-million commercial real estate transactions and the scope of paperwork involved is mountainous.

The mammoth task of processing the dozens or hundreds of documents associated with these millions of transactions falls upon state governments. Register of Deeds offices, operated mostly at the county level, are faced with shrinking budgets and staff and are desperately seeking ways to speed up document processing and filing without sacrificing accuracy. In North Carolina, these offices are turning to document scanning and imaging, optical character recognition and electronic filing as a solution.

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–Keith Parker-Lowe
Chief Executive Officer
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Parker-Lowe develops turnkey solutions for register of deeds offices, delivering both customized software applications as well as a full complement of hardware to automate the physical process of scanning millions of pages. But not just any hardware will do.



“When we choose which hardware products to sell as part of our solutions, a key requirement is a high degree of flexibility and customization,” said company CEO Keith Parker-Lowe. “Many companies make printers and scanners, but a development platform that empowers the hardware to route document images, generate and validate identification bar codes, and do it all with the user pressing a single key is beyond the capability of most of them.”

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The Solution

Since Parker-Lowe’s workflow solutions encompass print, copy, scan and fax, a single device incorporating all of these features is essential. Even more critical is the ability to access and customize the devices’ operator panels to create easily understood icons representing often-repeated tasks.

To eliminate the overhead of developing a solution using separate scanners, printers, copiers and fax devices, Parker-Lowe chose to build its workflow solutions around multifunction printers (MFPs) that could be customized to automate document workflow. Several companies manufacture MFPs and Parker-Lowe could have chosen any brand.

“After a thorough hands-on comparison, we found Lexmark’s products provided the highest quality and most powerful platform for customization to work seamlessly with our application software,” said Parker-Lowe. “The Lexmark products also provide access to the operator panel, allowing us to create custom icons and user prompts that interact with our applications in real time.”

With a high-quality business-class monochrome laser printer at its core, Lexmark MFPs integrate an auto-feed document scanner, copier, and network fax into a single space-saving unit. Designed as a capture point for electronic document management systems (EDMS), Lexmark MFPs feature a touch-screen operator panel that is easily personalized, reducing complex operations to touching just one on-screen icon.

Hardware, however, is but half of a document workflow solution.

“We needed to provide our customers with the capability to perform multi-step operations that included scanning, indexing, storing, routing, and backing up by tapping just one icon on the operator panel,” said Parker-Lowe. “The only integrated development platform that fully met our needs was the Lexmark Document Solutions Suite.”

A powerful suite of 11 modules, Parker-Lowe built its solution using Lexmark Document Distributor (LDD), a customizable server-based document distribution system that automates manual processes to optimize paper and digital document workflow. By automating manual steps and using document barcode technology, businesses can eliminate the misrouting, misfiling and outright loss of documents associated with manual paper-handling. LDD features a powerful, easy-to-use scripting engine, making it fully customizable for any enterprise while maintaining interoperability with e-mail and file-storage infrastructures.

“With LDD, we created scripts that allow people with limited training to scan a multipage document and have the system save it to the correct repository; print, e-mail, and fax it; make a backup copy on DVD, prepare it for microfilm, and place it on a Web site instantly – all by touching one custom icon on the MFP operator panel,” Parker-Lowe said. “Lexmark’s MFP devices and Document Distributor software allow us to quickly and easily develop powerful workflow solutions for our clients.”

To assure that systems integrators such as Parker-Lowe develop high-quality solutions, Lexmark offers the Certified Solution Provider program, providing technical training for hardware and development tools as well as immediate access to technical support engineers.

The Results

Parker-Lowe has installed hundreds of Lexmark MFPs and LDD workflow applications for county register of deeds offices throughout North Carolina. With just minimal training, personnel from clerks to administrators are finding the solutions easy to use and a boon to productivity.

“The Lexmark MFP has made our daily scanning process much easier than a desktop scanner,” said Lora Mooney Byrd, Hyde County Register of Deeds. “We scan once and documents are indexed and stored, and printed for immediate insertion in the county’s master real estate book. We’ve cut weeks off the process.” In fact, the manual routing and processing of documents by up to a dozen people, which took up to 30 days, is now accomplished and verified in just a few minutes.

“The Lexmark scanner has worked out perfectly for us at the Tyrrell County Register of Deeds Office,” said Melanie L Armstrong, Tyrrell County Register of Deeds. “It’s a very user-friendly machine and it is rare that we ever experience a problem. We look forward to scanning documents with our Lexmark MFP because it’s actually fun, fast and very efficient.”

Parker-Lowe is already hard at work developing new applications for the Lexmark MFP platform, such as connections to biometric controls through a fingerprint or retinal scan. Positive identification will be essential for another use the company is examining. “We may allow users to print their paychecks on demand in the future from special paper-stock stored in a locked paper drawer,” said Parker-Lowe.

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For Parker-Lowe & Associates, flexibility at the hardware and applications development levels are creating new opportunities to deliver custom workflow solutions generating substantial profit margins. “People have said for years that there is no profit in selling printers,” said Parker-Lowe. “With Lexmark, we are finding profitable opportunities are limited only by our imagination.”