

The Top 5 Bottom Line Impacts of Implementing Scanning into Your Practice

You've read about scanner technology, you have colleagues who use scanners in their practices, and you've contemplated implementing them into yours, but you're still not convinced. Sure, it sounds good, but you wonder just how beneficial adding scanners would really be. Below, scanner benefits simplified. While there are undoubtedly other side benefits, these are the five biggest bottom line impacts experienced by small practices that implement scanner technology at their front desk.

1. Increased efficiency

Front desk productivity is reduced every time staff leave their desk to photocopy a document. Depending on the number of employees working at your front desk, this time can really add up. Even practices with minimal front desk staff coverage can lose valuable time when personnel leave their post to make copies. This lost time means bottom line dollars to your practice. And the more documents copied, the more paper that requires manual filing and possible later retrieval for reference (and then re-filing) – all time consuming and ultimately costly in terms of staff productivity.

Just what might the extent of the impact be? For the sake of example, assume your practice sees 60 patients per day, and for each patient your single front desk employee spends one minute making copies – that's a total of 5 hours per week of lost productivity. If you pay that employee fifteen dollars per hour, you lose \$75 productivity dollars per week, for a total of \$3,900 productivity hours lost per year. And that's for just one front desk employee; if you have more employees, or if your salary rate is higher, you're losing even more. Add a scanner to your front desk, and these losses become gains.

Bottom line: The use of front desk scanners keeps staff at their desks, accelerates processes and improves productivity – all of which can be calculated in terms of dollar impact to your practice.

CALL OUT BOX – SET SEPARATELY FROM MAIN TEXT:

Efficiency impact of front desk scanning

Productivity gain / week, 1 front desk employee	5.0 hours
Productivity dollars saved / week, 1 employee	\$75.00
Productivity dollars saved / year, 1 employee	\$3,900

Efficiency impact of front desk scanning

	1 employee	2 employees	3 employees
Productivity gain / week,	5.0 hours	10 hours	15 hours
Productivity dollars saved / week	\$75	\$150	\$225
Productivity dollars saved / year	\$3,900	\$7,800	\$11,700

Assumptions

1 front desk employee
 60 patients per day
 1 minute copy time saved per scan
 Front desk employee pay rate \$15.00/hour

2. Decreased materials costs

Copier operating and maintenance costs add up. Toner and paper are calculable repeat costs. For example, if your toner and paper costs are \$.03 per page, and your practice sees 60 patients per day, each of which has 1 page of information copied, that adds up to \$9 per week, and \$468 per year. Scheduled maintenance is another given. Less predictable but

potentially more costly are service calls to repair malfunctioning equipment, and both scheduled and unplanned service calls increase the more the copier is used. The cost of storing paper files is also part of the equation for most small practices. Off-site storage is clearly a potentially high-impact cost. On-site storage can represent a less tangible loss of space that could be used more effectively or that presents an obstacle to efficient work flow.

Bottom line: Deploying front desk scanners reduces reliance on your copier, which means savings on paper, toner, maintenance and storage.

CALL OUT BOX – SET SEPARATELY FROM MAIN TEXT:

Materials impact of front desk scanning

Paper and toner savings / week	\$9
Paper and toner savings / year	\$468

Assumptions

60 patients per day
 1 page copied per patient
 Per page paper/toner cost of \$.03

3. Reduction in errors

Errors in data entry are an unfortunate but common occurrence. A 1992 study of secretaries and clerks typing nonsense words (which are comparable in complexity to last names and ID numbers) had an error rate of 7.4%*. Other studies of standard text indicate a rate of from 1%- 4% and many consider 3%-5% a realistic guideline**. A good employee will of course review his or her work and correct errors. While this is vastly preferable to the alternative (leaving the error), it is time consuming and can have a notable impact on productivity. Although it would be difficult to calculate a specific dollar impact of this productivity loss, it clearly could be significant. Beyond the lost dollars and time is the potential impact to claims reimbursement processing and accurate record keeping.

Bottom line: Scanning IDs and insurance cards at the front desk will capture patient data 100% error-free.

* Mattson & Baars [1992]

**Grudin [1983], Mathias, MacKenzie & Buxton [1996]

4. Improved security of personal data; enhanced HIPAA compliance

No one wants their personal data floating around for many eyes to see, and HIPAA regulations require healthcare providers to make every reasonable effort to keep patient information secure and confidential. Using a photocopier to collect patient information requires several additional points of contact with the data than does digital capture with a scanner (see chart), and paper files are certainly more vulnerable to being misplaced, misfiled or left out in the open. Digital files can be scanned and electronically managed by a single employee for heightened privacy along with greater security and more efficient workflow.

Bottom line: Scanning patient data keeps it private and secure.

Points of contact: Electronic vs. Paper Files

Photocopier	Front Desk Scanner
Patient hands staff ID cards	Patient hands staff ID cards

Staff takes IDs to photocopier	ID / insurance card are scanned
IDs are photocopied	ID cards are handed back to patient
IDs are handed back to patient	
Paper copies are put aside to file	
Paper copies are filed	

5. Improved patient and staff satisfaction

Often viewed as intangibles, improvements in customer service, patient relations, and staff satisfaction can indeed impact your practice's bottom line. These are the people-oriented benefits that can influence a patient's likelihood to return or refer others to your practice, or your employees' tendency to seek employment elsewhere – or to stay and be motivated to improve performance. Granted, a scanner alone may not have this kind of influence, but as part of the big picture determining satisfaction and motivation, it can certainly have an influence.

Numerous studies have found that longer wait times are associated with lower patient satisfaction.* When patient information is scanned at your front desk, admissions and registration are expedited and patient wait times reduced, resulting in greater satisfaction among your patients. Not surprisingly, when patients are happier, interactions with staff tend to be more positive as well, with a corresponding improvement in employee satisfaction.

Bottom line: The tangible improvements that scanner technology brings to your practice will boost the intangibles as well, for more satisfied patients and staff.

* Willing to wait?: The influence of patient wait time on satisfaction with primary care. Roger T Anderson,¹ Fabian T Camacho,¹ and Rajesh Balkrishnan² (Cites 5 additional studies demonstrating the correlation of longer wait times with negative patient satisfaction.)

Bonus! Your practice gets greener, and healthier.

Reducing your reliance on the copier not only means you spend less on paper and toner, it means less waste ends up in landfills as well. It also means the air inside your practice will be cleaner and healthier.

Toner cartridges take hundreds of thousands of years to decompose, and the plastic in each cartridge takes approximately 3.3 liters of oil to produce. In addition, 4 liters of petroleum are burned to manufacture one toner cartridge, releasing the equivalent of .01 metric tons of CO₂ into the atmosphere. So for every toner cartridge your practice doesn't use, you save around 7.3 liters of petroleum and 0.1 metric tons less CO₂ is released into our world.*

If you use petroleum-based paper and toner products, indoor air quality will improve the less your photocopier is used. Petroleum-based inks and toners contain solvents that emit volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Paper that is processed through a copy machine (or printer) can emit a variety of VOCs, including some known carcinogens.** Long-term exposure to low concentrations of VOCs can result in liver or kidney effects and at somewhat higher concentrations, breathing some of these contaminants may cause irritation of the respiratory tract.***

Bottom line: Adding scanner technology helps protect our environment and your employees – both of which can further boost employee morale.

* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toner_refill#Environmental_reasons_to_refill_cartridges

**<http://www.green.ca.gov/EPP/OfficeMach/toner.htm>

***<http://www.cdph.state.co.us/hm/schlage/vocfactsheet.pdf>