

Resolve Scanning Problems Sooner with Operation Alerts



By Chad Eiler

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Business intelligence and analytics have again become the top technology priority for CIOs, replacing cloud computing, according to a recent survey by Stamford, CT-based Gartner¹.

It's no wonder. With the ever-increasing demand to improve corporate efficiency and agility, business intelligence and analytics can yield compelling returns.

In a document scanning environment, every operations manager has experienced the same frustration: they can't get the timely information they need to analyze scanning performance and spot problems as they occur. Too often, problems become visible only after it's too late to make changes. Throughput drops, keying or error rates soar, or deadlines are missed. Costs can soar.

Faced with unyielding cost pressures, organizations can no longer afford this reactive approach.

Fortunately, an organization can now combine analytics and automated alerts to improve their decision-making, cut costs and identify new opportunities for process improvements.

A new breed of analytics software provides timely alerts about performance shortfalls, so operations managers can now detect problems and make more informed decisions within a time frame that is most effective. This approach is far more proactive when compared to the time-honored tradition of periodically “eye-balling” trays of paper spread across operator workstations, and adjusting staff accordingly. And it is far more effective than scanner reporting tools that generate canned reports at the end of the month of say, throughput, so analysts can later trudge through mounds of weeks-old data.

With operation alerts, managers can make decisions with little or no delay based on current analysis. In this case, analytics is much more valuable than a reporting tool. It's a way for an operations manager to get timely visibility into the operations and make more effective and impactful adjustments to meet the demands of today's business environment.

Operations Intelligence

Operation alerts enable managers to pre-configure acceptable thresholds for a wide variety of scanning metrics, including: throughput, feed rates, equipment downtime and idle time, check read-rates, error-to-document ratios, database size, and the number of batches that need to be processed.

If operation performance in any area falls below a pre-defined threshold, managers automatically receive an e-mail alert notifying them of the situation. To avoid false alarms, operations managers can configure the frequency that the solution analyzes scanning performance for each metric.

¹ Gartner Inc., *IT's Top Priorities for 2012*. <http://www.gartner.com/technology/research/> (January 2012)

To be sure, timely alerts about scanning performance issues will help make operations more nimble.

But these alerts also help operations become more cost-effective.

Case Studies

Consider the case of a bank that uses an offshore partner to key E13B check data that isn't automatically interpreted by its recognition software. The bank should continuously monitor the recognition rates of its scanning solution to ensure that it's not sending more work than necessary to its offshore partner, which would drive up its costs and potentially result in delayed deposits.



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Using traditional operations monitoring approaches, a drop in courtesy amount read rates could go undetected for hours or even days, resulting in the unnecessary keying of thousands of checks. In the case of a bank processing a modest 70,000 checks a day, a five percent drop in its recognition rate that goes undetected for three days would result in 10,500 additional checks being keyed offshore.

With operations analytics, managers are automatically alerted if recognition rates fall below pre-defined levels, allowing them to investigate the problem and take action in as little as a few minutes.

Operations analytics also helps service bureaus maximize the use of their scanners – which is critical to their bottom line. Managers can be automatically alerted if wall-clock throughput for a particular scanner drops below a pre-defined threshold of say, 75 percent utilization. Similarly, if the service bureau has a daily throughput goal of 80,000 documents per day for each of its scanners, managers can be automatically alerted if a scanner didn't process 10,000 documents in a given hour. Once alerted, managers can investigate the problem and quickly adjust staff or divert more work to a scanner.

Operations analytics also helps to improve scanner productivity, and, in turn, return on investment (ROI), by automatically identifying errors during the document preparation process.

For instance, a state government agency may have very specific batching and document order requirements. In many cases, agencies will configure their scanners to stop and alert the operator when they detect a particular document type that is in the wrong position in a batch. During an agency's peak tax processing season, this can result in the need for additional labor or even shifts.

With operations analytics, managers can be automatically alerted when too many batches have been prepped incorrectly, allowing them to take action more quickly to correct document prep issues.

The Bottom Line

Operation analytics can help an organization to improve scanner productivity by automatically identifying errors during the document scanning process, immediately notifying the manager and providing real-time reports. This will lead to a better return on investment (ROI).