

ALL OPTIONS ARE OPEN WITH AN ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT SOLUTION THAT OFFERS PRINTING AND ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION CAPABILITIES FROM A SINGLE PLATFORM

PERSPECTIVE

At least 25 years ago, analysts and futurists envisioned offices in which paper was a thing of the past. The "Office of the Future" would combine computing and communications to make the generation and transmittal of documents a fully electronic, seamless process.

Elements of the "Office of the Future" may well be here, but it is not yet the paperless package conceived by early advocates, and it may not become that for some time to come – if ever. There are some simple reasons: people like and trust paper, it conveys to them a sense of security, it is cheap to buy and easy to store.

In fact, the printing industry has even developed a specialized branch that involves the design and printing of business forms -- invoices, purchase orders, etc. However, expenses for these **preprinted forms** can be enormous, with storage, inventory, handling and spoilage potentially more than doubling the initial costs.

TECHNOLOGY TO THE RESCUE

As an alternative to these preprinted forms, recent technological advances have enabled companies to **design and print their own business forms**, using electronic forms software and a laser printer. Using this software, companies create electronic form templates that can be stored on their computer, and then printed on plain paper, as needed, using a laser printer.

Recognizing the power and flexibility of these solutions, ACOM Solutions, Inc. developed electronic forms software that would:

- Enable users to design and store electronic form templates (e.g., PO's, invoices, statements, advance shipping notices, etc.);
- Provide seamless connectivity to the organization's financial/ERP database in order to automatically populate these forms with the corresponding data.

ACOM calls the concept **EZeDocs/400**, the Electronic Document Output Management Solution. EZeDocs/400 was initially conceived as an efficiency-enhancing, cost-saving alternative to the use of preprinted forms and label stock. However, the concept has now been extended dramatically to cover virtually all document-related functions – it permits employees to **print, fax, email, view, and archive documents at will, without ever leaving their desks**. Printed hard copies are now only one of five available output options.

A TOTAL SOLUTION APPROACH

EZeDocs/400 is a powerful, host-resident, integrated iSeries (AS/400) Electronic Document Output Management Solution, which involves a simple, four-step process:

- Creation of the electronic version of the form (and/or label)
- Storage of the template on the host computer
- Establishment of document distribution protocol (print, email, fax, or archive)
- Distribution

When documents are needed, data merges with the respective form template, then the completed form is laser-printed or transmitted

electronically. EZeDocs/400 can even automatically route electronic documents based on data (i.e., print, email, or fax).

EZeDocs/400 provides the following key benefits:

- **Eliminates cost and inventory** issues of using preprinted forms and outside print shops.
- Enables **easy modifications** and upgrades to documents in minutes -- no need to toss outdated preprinted forms.
- Finished documents **cost pennies** versus up to \$1.00 each.
- Enables **electronic archiving of forms** for easy retrieval, directly from their iSeries (AS/400).
- The process **vastly enhances business efficiency and workflow**, by enabling the user to automatically split an iSeries (AS/400) spool file and send it via fax, email, or to a laser printer, right from their iSeries (AS/400).
- It **generates cost savings** on printing, processing, personnel, distribution, supplies and postage expenses.

Conversely, the **costly and time-consuming traditional procedure** involved preprinting and management of several multi-copy forms; secure storage and inventory of the forms; retrieval at time of use; manually loading impact printers; post-processing (including bursting, decollating and sorting); and finally, distribution of the printed copies through internal or external mail systems.

FUNCTIONAL SOLUTIONS

ACOM's EZeDocs/400 enables companies to get their orders, shipments and invoices out more quickly, to get the money in the bank more quickly, and to better manage cash flow. Let us examine the individual modules of EZeDocs/400 and their capabilities.

EZeDocs/400 - eForms Module

The eForms module is the central engine of the EZeDocs/400 total solution, as well as a powerful standalone electronic document software solution. It seamlessly integrates with each company's ERP/legacy system, and works in the background to merge accounting system spool files with stored electronic templates, in order to generate completed documents on-demand, singly or in batch mode, on a laser or thermal printer.

When a form is needed, the module pulls the required data from the company's enterprise software system, formats the data into the respective electronic document template, and spools the formatted document out to a laser or thermal printer for production on blank paper stock.

The electronic form templates are used in lieu of preprinted forms, and can be designed in two ways: using x-y coordinates directly on the iSeries (AS/400) green screen, or by using the integrated GUI design tool of the EZeDocs/400 eForms module. Then the templates are stored on the iSeries (AS/400) for use as needed.

EZeDocs/400 - Fax Module

The Fax module of EZeDocs/400 is a host-resident fax utility that enables users to edit, send, receive, display, print and track fax documents, spool files or images from any iSeries (AS/400) computer terminal or connected PC. It also performs a variety of imaging and information management tasks. It integrates directly with the electronic forms solution and permits

fax documents (like invoices and purchase orders) to be transmitted seamlessly and automatically from their iSeries (AS/400), with no intermediate handling. This provides convenience, flexibility, and cost savings.

Anything that can be done with a conventional fax machine can be done easier and more quickly with the EZeDocs/400's Fax module, and much more. In addition to extended manual, automatic and broadcast facsimile capabilities, the module's functionality includes message processing, imaging, information management and application program interfacing (API's – which make integration with existing enterprise software a simple, easy process).

EZeDocs/400 - eMail Module

The eMail module of EZeDocs/400 is a full-function, host-resident email solution that allows iSeries (AS/400) users to exchange Internet email, with attachments, from 5250 terminals, PC mail clients, or any browser. It is seamlessly interfaced with the eForms module of EZeDocs/400, enabling users to transmit documents (like invoices and purchase orders) automatically and directly from their iSeries (AS/400). It can connect to Internet service providers by dial-up or through high-speed connections (like DSL, ISDN or cable connections), and it can exchange mail through any network mail server (including Exchange Servers and Notes/Domino Servers).

The eMail module of EZeDocs/400 is easy to install on any iSeries (AS/400) computer. New users normally can send and receive email messages within hours of downloading the package. Security is assured by the fact that the software detects and will not start any servers that can be used to break into the computer.

EZeDocs/400 - PDF Module

The PDF module of EZeDocs/400 enables users to convert any iSeries (AS/400) spool file with Printer Command Language (PCL) commands into Portable Document Format (PDF) documents which can then be read on-screen, printed, sent by email, web-posted, and filed in electronic archives for quick, convenient viewing, printing or further distribution.

A document in PCL format cannot be viewed, because the spool file is generated in code and there is no common PCL viewing utility. If a PCL document is emailed, it is therefore unreadable. However, the PDF module of EZeDocs/400 provides a way to view documents, which bypasses the printing process. Once the document is in PDF format, there is a great deal of handling flexibility. And with PDF rapidly becoming a standard, the PDF module of EZeDocs/400 offers significant convenience, efficiency and control for iSeries (AS/400) users.

EZeDocs/400 - eLabels Module

The eLabels module of EZeDocs/400 lets users generate industry standard barcodes and labels, as well as to integrate barcodes with documents as the documents are being generated, all through the use of electronically stored label templates and blank label stock.

Besides supporting industry standard barcode types such as UPC, 3 of 9, Postnet, Code 128, it also complies with heavily used proprietary formats such as AIAG, Kmart, Wal-Mart, JCPenny and many others.

The eLabels module is host-resident with EZeDocs/400 on the iSeries (AS/400) platform, and eliminates the traditional physical requirement of printing an inventory of barcodes. The eLabels Module accesses your financial/ERP database and turns your data into barcodes "on the fly" at print time, using any compatible laser or thermal printer.

Speed, efficiency and print quality are enhanced through use of laser and thermal transfer printers, and document layout changes can be effected in minutes, allowing great flexibility in output. EZeDocs/400's eLabels module is compatible with virtually all enterprise software solutions (including BPCS, HTE, JD Edwards, MAPICS, SAP, and many more).

EZeDocs/400 - Archive Module

The Archive module of EZeDocs/400 enables users to automatically archive any documents they processed using the EZeDocs/400 eForms Module, for later retrieval. Documents are stored in PCL format, in order to conserve valuable storage resources, and may be stored on the IFS (Integrated File System) or any network server.

The Archive Module software comes with an easy-to-use, powerful search and retrieval engine that makes finding and viewing specific archived documents very simple. Users can search for a variety of fields, such as document type, name, date, etc. At the time of retrieval, using a PC-based graphical user interface, documents are converted to PDF format. The user can then view the document on screen or transmit it via fax or email.

IMPROVING CASH FLOW WITH eDELIVERY OF INVOICES

Most companies still collect their revenues by issuing invoices that are generated on preprinted, multipart forms and delivered by mail – the most expensive and the slowest alternative available as well as the one that carries the greatest risk of loss or delay.

EZeDocs/400 offers users the ability to speed up collections and improve cash management by generating invoices electronically, avoiding the printing process entirely. With EZeDocs/400, a company can send its invoices by automated fax, directly from their iSeries (AS/400). The company can also create PDF documents of its invoices and include them as email attachments – likewise delivered electronically, directly from their iSeries (AS/400).

The savings and benefits are quickly apparent: there is no longer any need for preprinted forms or the post-processing equipment and operating personnel required for manual invoice distribution; costs are reduced from \$1.50 or more. Finally, and perhaps most important, Days Sales Outstanding drop dramatically through instantaneous communication and the assurance that the invoices will not be lost or delayed in the mail. Cash management improves through faster collections and more precise billing procedures.

The same methodology can be applied to other transaction processes, such as purchase orders, order acknowledgements and shipping documents, with commensurate impact on the bottom line.

CONCLUSION

ACOM's EZeDocs/400 solution supports businesses in their quest to streamline their operations, better serve their clientele, and maximize the output of their resources. EZeDocs/400 is an extremely flexible modular solution, which means that businesses can purchase the entire **EZeDocs Total Solution** and integrate all of the features and benefits right away, or they can begin with a single module, such as eForms, adding additional modules as their wants and needs ordain.

Moreover, as business technology continues to advance, ACOM's solutions are "open" enough to advance with it. Experience the effectiveness of EZeDocs/400 by viewing the on-line self-guided product demonstration available at www.acom.com/demo400.htm

While you're visiting our website, be sure to explore our other iSeries (AS/400) solutions for payments and B2B electronic commerce.

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