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management and workflow, and had seriously written off the hardware side of those critical accounting functions. After all, what more could be said about buying printers and scanners.

Dave McClure • Feb. 11, 2014

From the [Bleeding Edge blog](#):

I've been doing a lot of work writing and consulting on the topics of document management and workflow, and had seriously written off the hardware side of those critical accounting functions. After all, what more could be said about buying printers and scanners.

Mike O'Leary at [Ambir Technologies](#) changed my mind.

Ambir makes scanners and software for document management and workflow, and he took strong exception to the idea that you simply buy a big, auto-feed scanner and put it somewhere in the office. Instead, he presented a concept of distributed scanning by accounting professionals that made strong economic sense. To be fair, [Fujitsu](#), arguably the leader in the scanner market for professionals in document management, has also begun to push for distributed scanning.

But Ambir was the first to put it succinctly. "The scanner technologies in use today are very good," notes Mike O'Leary, CEO of Ambir Technologies. "But we see several trends emerging specifically in scanner technologies. The first of these is the move away from a centralized office scanner to a distributed scanner strategy."

[By way of disclosure, I do not work for, own stock in, or have any interest in these companies. And If I did, would be honor-bound not to mention them here.]

Ambir outlined the concept that you can't simply put a big, honking, autofeed

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Ambir has a line of low-footprint, economical scanners to consider, and the software to go with them. Likewise, Fujitsu has its ScanSnap line of scanners that also offer economy and a small footprint. And there are a number of other vendors moving into this space, including Hewlett-Packard, Epson, Kodak, Plustek, Canon and Xerox.

So how does this fit into the workflow for a tax or accounting office? Distributed scanning retains the large, autofeed document scanner to handle the large chores, but gives each professional in the office a smaller (think 12 inches by 4 inches) desktop model that can capably handle single pages or smaller receipts and invoices.

"It is not about the devices," says O'Leary. "It is about using technology in new ways both in and out of the office to drive productivity and profitability."

According to O'Leary, the scanner of the future will be small. It will be wireless, mobile, and more secure. It will fit in the briefcase of an auditor, tax preparer or business consultant, and will fit on a desktop.

Other scanner manufacturers agree. The market for scanners is evolving, and accountants would be well served to keep pace with this evolution.

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