

## **Document Management Solution for QuickBooks Users with Internal Controls**

By John H. Higgins, CPA.CITP

You're in business to sell a product or provide a service, not to chase paper around your office. Anytime you can leverage technology to automate and streamline routine processes it gives you the opportunity to spend more time focusing on what really makes your business successful. There has never been a better time than now to take advantage of technology to help you manage and grow your business. Two of the most promising emerging technologies to help you do this are electronic document management and workflow automation software. Both of these powerful tools are rapidly gaining recognition in the marketplace.

A brief explanation of these two technologies is in order. Document management software (DMS) has been around for awhile, but it has only recently begun to gain acceptance as a "must have" application for businesses of all types and sizes. I'll spare you a dissertation on the array of features and functions that can be found in DMS software, but I will provide you with a frame of reference to help you understand what DMS is. Essentially, there are two key functions of a DMS system. One is to facilitate the scanning of paper documents and converting them into electronic images, hence the term paperless. The second key function is to serve as a file management system based on an indexing model similar the catalog system at the public library. The latter feature ultimately proves to be the more valuable function as



organizations find themselves dealing with exponential growth in their electronic files and not having a good tool to managing them.

Workflow automation software has emerged out of the necessity to manage the flow of information in a paperless environment. Most businesses have some form of paper based routing system to move documents throughout the organization. This may be through a combination of basic tools such as file folders, routing slips, checklists, etc. Workflow automation software is designed to replace these paper based tools in a paperless workflow. In addition, the workflow software typically provides you with the ability to map out the path that the electronic documents/files will be routed through the organization and ultimately provide an audit trail of who had what, when they had it and what they did with it.

One example of a tool that combines the features of document management and workflow automation software is SourceLink ME. This is a relatively powerful, yet inexpensive application that is designed for the expansive QuickBooks market. SourceLink is directly integrated with QuickBooks (QB) to give you the tools you need to control your finances better. The system provides you with a practical document management system that allows you to scan and attach documents (invoices, checks, receipts, etc.) directly to QB transactions. No more scurrying to the file cabinet every time you need to reference a document, only to have to go through the tedious task of creating a cover sheet and faxing it to the requestor. With SourceLink you simply scan and attach the electronic document image to the related transaction. From that point forward you can simply click on the transaction in QB and retrieve a copy of the document electronically to



view it, print it, or e-mail it. Electronic document management is the next “killer app” for business and it is available today.





The Management Edition of SourceLink incorporates the workflow automation tools that provide you with the functionality to help you keep better tabs on the cash flow of your business. This system gives you the ability to define specific internal control procedures for typical financial transactions such as customer invoicing, accounts payable invoice processing, check writing, etc.

An example of the type of control that you can define for your financial transactions is to require that a vendor invoice be approved (electronically) by a supervisor, owner, or whatever "role" you choose to designate, before it can be processed for payment. This approval can be requested automatically via e-mail notification prior to processing the invoice for payment. The person designated to authorize the transaction can choose to "approve" or "deny" the transaction. This functionality provides your business with one of the most fundamental internal control procedures necessary to help you prevent the most common fraudulent activity, that which is perpetrated inside your business, by the people you least suspect.

Additional functionality that can help you monitor the internal control of your accounting information includes automatic notification of the acceptance or denial of a requested action, i.e., invoice approval, as well as an electronic notification to alert you to the current status of an approval request.

DMS and workflow automation software is a “must have” application for anyone who wants to gain better efficiency and control of their information flow and optimize the potential of your management information system, no matter how large or small your organization is. “This software has really simplified my life and I have received more than my money’s worth for it” notes Marty Jones of Design Pro in Bemen, Georgia, speaking of his experience with these applications. Marty’s business specializes in serving as a go between for customers who need digital embroidering services. This requires the exchange and transfer of numerous documents in the design and approval process. Marty scans and collects all of the related documents for a project and links them to the appropriate transactions in his accounting system for quick and easy retrieval. And since this makes Marty’s business information “paperless”, he has the ability to access his office computer system remotely and *work at the office while he is away from the office*. That may be the most valuable benefit of all.

I would like to suggest that you owe it to yourself to take a close look at these emerging applications and learn first hand how they can streamline and protect your business information and financial assets, so that you can focus on what you do best; providing your customers with the products and services that you are best known for.

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