

Smart Storage and Fleet Bank: A CD-R Solution for Check Imaging

Check Imaging

Prior to the advent of CD technology, the banking industry used microfilm to distribute check images to customers who generated more than 15,000 checks per month. For other customers that required access to specific image data sets, banks typically provided dial-in access to mainframe-based electronic archives. Maintaining these archives, as well as moving data to microfilm for distribution, proved to be a time consuming, laborious process for both banks and customers. Immediate access to a specific check--even just to verify a deposit date, endorser's name, or for tax purposes--was impossible.

Major banks have already accepted imaging into their solutions--and now they're looking for a storage solution to replace paper and microfilm. CD-Recording (CD-R) technology offers benefits to a variety of check imaging applications. CD is ideal for storing check images, because it's a random access medium that is platform and application independent. A single CD can hold over 30,000 check images (front and back). Using low-cost CD jukeboxes and SmartCD Archive software from Smart Storage, it's possible to provide access to millions of check images at a very reasonable cost.

Distribution of CD-based data is also easy, because front-end software can be included on disc and read on any machine. The ongoing evolution in CD technology provides banks with the ability to deliver new levels of customer service and accessibility to check image information. The payoff is less manual interaction, lower overhead and increased customer satisfaction. A side benefit to banks is the reduction of check fraud, because data written to a CD cannot be deleted or changed.

Mainframe or Client-Server?

Banks considering CD-R for check imaging at this juncture need to make a strategic decision: to implement either a mainframe solution, or to move much of the check processing activities to a client-server based process. While mainframe solutions are present in most banks, creating inertia to use existing hardware, the related costs are much higher than a comparable client/server solution. Besides being cost-effective, client/server based systems offer greater flexibility to administrators and end-users.

Fleet's CD-R Solution

The banking industry is already identifying areas where CD technology has a particularly good fit. Fleet Bank of Boston, Massachusetts, is a paragon in the application of this technology to check imaging, and is already investigating its use in other core business functions. Fleet looked at both mainframe and client-server options, and determined that a client-server based approach made sense. "When evaluating the alternatives in the capture process it was clear that the workstation-based solution was more cost-effective," said Robert Clauss, Vice President of Imaging Services and Financial Installations for Fleet Bank.

While Fleet offers its customers the option of receiving check image data on CD (in addition to remote access or microfilm), they took the process one step further by developing a user-friendly application that enables customers to access check-image information scattered across several

CDs by simple form-based querying. This search and retrieval engine is included with all CDs distributed.

Smart Storage Inc. of Andover, Massachusetts is a partner in Fleet's check imaging solution and provides several of the technological enabling tools used to develop Fleet's CD solution. Fleet employs Smart Storage's SmartWrite CD-HV software for state-of-the-art production of CDs over a Windows NT network. SmartWrite CD-HV is an integral piece of the automated process that moves check images to CD-R using a Kodak autoloading CD-Recorder. SmartWrite CD also maintains a file of all CDs written, indexed by a unique serial number and corresponding bar code, so you can quickly see what's on each disc. SmartWrite CD-HV also gives information on the status of each job, and reports any errors in recording.

Benefits of CD-Recordable Technology in Banking

As one of the first banks to embrace the move to CD-R storage, Fleet is already reaping the benefits. They maintain archives of check images on CDs in jukeboxes, which are effortlessly accessed with Smart Storage's SmartCD Archive software. They are delivering CD-based data to customers that demand easy search and retrieval, and thereby eliminating the need for dial-in access. Creating customer CDs is automated with SmartWrite CD-HV. Finally, they are recommending SmartCD Archive software to their corporate clients with multiple CDs. The benefits to Fleet customers include:

- Long-term storage of check images
- Easy access to check image data
- Ability to store much more data than previously possible
- Cost-effectiveness
- Increased satisfaction

Eventually, customers that accumulate collections of CD-Rs from fleet may choose to archive discs in CD jukeboxes. Fleet recommends Smart Storage's CD access software to their customers for accessing large data sets, especially on multiple CDs. In effect, Fleet, like other major banks moving to CD, is doing the job of a service bureau.

Michael Corbosiero of Fleet's Image Services states: "Smart Storage's products made more sense than all the alternatives we examined, because their products were easier to use and simpler to integrate with our retrieval application. Most importantly, we felt that the quality of their support was superior to that of the competition."

Fleet Bank also noted that Smart Storage offered the widest spectrum of capabilities for companies and banks interested in implementing CD-based solutions. The following table outlines the bank's use of the Smart Storage technology, which can be roughly categorized into two groups, 1) data transfer to CD-Recordable media and, 2) LAN-based data access to large groups of CDs residing in jukeboxes.

	CD-Recordable	CD Jukebox-based image storage
Primary User	Banks	Customer
Primary Requirement	High-performance, automated production capabilities	Cross-external users access to image
Smart Storage Product	SmartWrite CD-	SmartCD Archive SmartCD Library

Future Applications

In addition to check imaging applications, Fleet Bank believes that other functional areas with similar system characteristics are ripe for -based solution. For example, cash management

suitable for CD. “Customers want CD-expect high on-ailability of production data.” Smart Storage is helping Fleet meet those expectations, from check imaging to data distribution and access.

Additionally, CD based mass storage allows banks to set up large internal archives that provide near line access to check images. Such archives would support customer service functions