



# Boost Efficiency with a Digital Bill of Lading Workflow

**Automating labor-intensive steps leads to greater speed and productivity, while reducing costs, errors and delays.**

Manufacturers face many shipping challenges today, as paper overload continues to threaten efficient workload processes. Where there's paper, there's a problem — and that's a daily occurrence in the most paper-intensive areas of logistics.

Pre-printed bill of lading (BOL) forms contribute to the phenomenon of paper overload, bringing with them higher printing costs and a distinct lack of flexibility. These pre-printed multipart forms are typically distributed separately to five or six destinations, further increasing the possibility of error and delay.

Offsite document storage makes it that much more difficult and time-consuming to access shipping records, in part because it's easy to misfile paper. For that matter, with records-retention requirements of up to seven years, storage expenses can be high, and file retrieval can be difficult. Scrambling to locate these documents can ultimately lead to additional delays and escalating costs, all at the expense of customer satisfaction.

How to circumvent these issues? While it's true that paper will likely remain part of BOL workflow for a long time, digital BOL solutions can automate previously labor-intensive steps to provide significant business benefits. Manufacturing companies migrating to these solutions are benefitting by:

- ✓ Realizing significant cost savings
- ✓ Increasing the efficiency of their shipping operations
- ✓ Gaining faster access to the information

## **A Better Approach: Digital BOL**

Current best practices in the digital BOL arena rely on a combination of smart multifunction printers (MFPs) and workflow software. MFPs replace separate printer, copier and fax devices with an integrated system, saving space



while reducing costs and increasing functionality at the point of use. Workflow software transforms smart MFPs into productivity tools.

This approach eliminates the high costs associated with expensive pre-printed, multipart forms while reducing the need for hardcopy storage. Manufacturers benefit from improved shipping workflow that eliminates a host of manual steps while providing more secure document control and retention. And the fact that many users can access stored digital BOLs simultaneously saves time, while improving customer service and satisfaction.

Solutions such as those offered by Lexmark International can automatically deliver the BOL to users in whatever format is appropriate, including fax or email. Employees can conduct a flexible and efficient search based on customer name, order or shipment number.

## **Improving Productivity with Digital BOL**

A robust digital BOL solution provides up-to-the-minute accuracy by capturing the print job, reformatting the page to add



barcodes or other key indexing information and then printing a one-page BOL on plain paper. Employees can use the same MFP to load signed BOLs and other hardcopy documents into digital workflow at the point of use.

The solution then routes documents digitally to intended recipients — from customers to carriers, internal departments to U.S. Customs to file storage — via fax, email, scan or print.

### Choosing a Digital BOL Solution

Manufacturers should partner with experienced managed print services providers that offer digital BOL bundled solutions featuring everything needed to streamline BOL workflow. Ideal solutions combine hardware and software with consultation and workflow design services that integrate the implementation into an organization's existing infrastructure.

### Every BOL can make the journey from the shipping dock to the business office in a matter of minutes instead of days.

Putting it all together, digital BOL solutions translate into faster access to information, elimination of outmoded manual steps, better customer support and substantial cost savings. These benefits accrue from the increased efficiency in BOL applications and across all shipping operations. The improvements go well beyond the warehouse floor to permeate all aspects of manufacturing logistics. Every BOL can make the journey from the shipping dock to the business office in a matter of minutes instead of days.

### How to Shorten the Path to ROI

Before implementing a digital BOL solution, however, it's important to analyze the precise needs of all departments and facilities throughout the manufacturing organization, from dock to desktop and across all geographies. The best way to do this is to partner with an experienced managed print services provider that can help conduct the analysis, design and customization of the solution, configure and install it, and then conduct testing to ensure proper system functionality. Seeking this assistance can dramatically shorten the time it takes to implement the solution and reap its benefits. ■

**To learn more about how to achieve more efficient digital bill of lading workflows, please visit Lexmark at [www.lexmark.com](http://www.lexmark.com).**

### ▶ BEST PRACTICES FOR DIGITAL BOL

Implementing a potent digital bill of lading (BOL) solution can yield a host of benefits to manufacturing and distribution organizations. Here's a quick checklist of what to look for when seeking a partner for a digital BOL implementation:

- ✓ Partner with an experienced managed print services provider that can assist with solution design, customization and integration
- ✓ Participate as the vendor conducts an extensive analysis across the organization to determine exact needs and objectives
- ✓ Opt for multifunction printers (MFPs) to replace separate printer, copier and fax devices
- ✓ Seek out a vendor that offers optimized software that can accommodate the BOL workflow
- ✓ Choose solutions that provide the ability to merge data into a pre-defined electronic BOL form
- ✓ Ensure that the solution enables BOL delivery in whatever format users need
- ✓ Select a partner that can integrate all aspects of the solution and test for functionality

### ABOUT LEXMARK

Lexmark International, Inc. (NYSE: LXX) is uniquely focused on connecting unstructured print and digital information across your enterprise with the processes, applications and people that need it most.