

NSI AutoStore 5.0



Feature Set	★★★★★
Value	★★★★☆
Ease of Administration	★★★★★
Ease of Use	★★★★★
Compatibility	★★★★★
Software Integration	★★★★★
Security	★★★★★
Dealer Support and Training.....	★★★★☆
Customer Support and Training	★★★★★
Documentation	★★★★★
Global Business Readiness.....	★★★★☆
Upgrade Path	★★★★★

OVERVIEW

NSi AutoStore 5 is a document capture and routing solution that enables organizations to transform slow paper-based processes into efficient electronic workflows simply by scanning their documents at an MFP or capturing electronic documents, such as e-mail attachments. At the MFP, AutoStore captures the scanned image, converts it into the desired format and sends it as a fax or e-mail message, stores it in a network or desktop drive, sends it to a Web or FTP site or integrates it into a back-end content management application, such as Microsoft SharePoint or Ricoh DocumentMall.

NSi states that AutoStore is installed on 28,000 servers supporting more than 280,000 devices.

What is Document Capture and Routing?

Organizations have traditionally used paper-based workflows to process information, resulting in the need for dozens of file cabinets and hundreds or thousands of folders for storing paper documents. Document capture and routing solutions use scanners or MFPs to scan paper documents into electronic files that can be very easily searched, shared and modified, greatly simplifying ease of access, while also tightening the security of the data those documents contain through encryption.

In addition to scanning paper documents, some document capture and routing solutions can also merge electronic files taken from various sources, such as e-mail, fax servers, or local or network drives, that are part of the same workflow into a single location where they can be more easily accessed. In addition to storing these files in a network folder, many document capture and routing solutions can also route the information contained in these documents directly into select back-end applications, such as content management systems. Tools called connectors enable a solution to provide this level of integration with particular third-party applications.

Product Profile

Product:	AutoStore
Version:	5.0
Software Developer:	Notable Solutions, Inc. (NSi)
System Requirements:	For a large deployment: XEON or Opteron CPU, 2 MB or more second level cache, multiple CPU or Cores, at least 4 GB of RAM, a 50-GB hard drive, 1 gigabit network, a single enterprise server and a processing slave, as well as Windows XP Pro, Vista, 2003 Server or 2008 Server.
Supported Devices:	Over 500 MFPs from Canon, Fujitsu, HP, Kodak, Konica Minolta, Kyocera Mita, Sharp, Xerox, Ricoh, Savin, Lanier and Gestetner.
Suggested Retail Price:	About \$1,200 for a single MFP-connected solution
Availability:	NSi authorized resellers

△ What We Thought



NSi AutoStore 5 is a scalable document capture and routing solution that can deliver significant productivity and security benefits across a broad range of industries, including finance, legal, education, healthcare, government, manufacturing and construction. The solution allows an entire workflow to be initiated quickly and easily, without requiring workers to perform many manual and time-consuming tasks. For example, AutoStore could be used to create a digital workflow for an accounting department to scan checks and invoices, enhance the image quality of the scanned images, perform OCR through the integrated ABBYY recognition engine, assign indexing codes, categorize each invoice by the employee handling that account, save all the images as searchable PDF files and then send the invoices to the correct departments and the checks to a central database.

AutoStore offers all the features that BLI has come to expect from a document capture and routing solution, such as an intuitive interface for end users and security policies that pass through transparently from third-party content management applications. Some features that make AutoStore rise above competing solutions are its touch-screen control panel compatibility with an extremely wide variety of MFP brands, the ability to capture both paper and electronic documents, integration with a large number of back-end applications and a collection of more than two dozen connectors included free of charge.

Just as important, AutoStore is exceedingly easy and intuitive for an administrator to configure, thanks to a simple drag-and-drop process creator that allows even complex workflows to be created very quickly. Because of its compatibility with a range of MFPs and back-end solutions, this solution is especially beneficial for mixed-fleet environments and other organizations with document-intensive workflows.

Strengths

- Control-panel integration with hundreds of MFPs from most leading vendors
- Includes free connectors to 32 back-end systems and applications
- Drag-and-drop workflow process creator
- Full complement of features, including automatic indexing, barcode recognition and OCR
- Advanced features such as watermarking, advanced OCR for multiple CPUs, document encryption and the ability to capture e-mail messages

Weaknesses

- Administrator software available only in English
- Only Windows-compatible

Feature Set



NSI AutoStore comes with most of the features one would expect of a capture system, such as zonal OCR, barcode recognition (1D and 2D), image cleanup, connection to ODBC-compliant systems, and file conversions. The system also includes watermarking, advanced OCR for multiple CPUs, support for a variety of document management systems, document encryption and the ability to capture and incorporate e-mail messages.

AutoStore can route documents to network folders (including FTP, SMB and WebDAV), Microsoft Exchange and Lotus Notes e-mail servers, and Microsoft SharePoint repositories. And users have the option of converting electronic files to Word, Excel, PowerPoint, CSV, PDF or PDF/A formats.

AutoStore 5.0 boasts integration with more than 500 MFPs and TWAIN-compliant document and network scanners. Standard image processing features include de-skew, de-speckle, blank-page removal, page splitting, hole-punch removal, content-based document rotation and more.

New Features in Version 5.0

- Integration with TWAIN-based MFPs and scanners
- Support for Windows Vista and 2008 Server
- Enhanced zonal OCR functionality via ABBYY FineReader
- Updated barcode engine
- Fujitsu fi-6010N network scanner support

Value



Although pricing varies depending on the deployment size, NSi's standard price is \$1,199, which includes one device license, three user licenses for the AutoCapture component and five client licenses for Send To Me/Send to PC routing component. Compared with similar product bundles, this solution is slightly better than the competition. Annual maintenance costs are a competitive 20% of the purchase price.

Ease of Administration



Administrators will appreciate the incredibly intuitive layout of this solution's drag-and-drop visual process designer. To create a custom workflow, an administrator drags and drops icons that correspond to the desired Capture, Process and Route components (GlobalScan, OCR and Documentum, for example) and saves the combination as a new workflow profile. There are currently several different capture, process and route applications and components that can be used in a workflow profile, with no coding required by the administrator.



AutoStore Workflow List

Icons for registered process components are found on the left-hand side of the screen and can be dropped anywhere into the Process Designer window. Workflows can be as simple or complex as necessary, with multiple icons used from each of the Capture, Process and Route components. Few other solutions, except for those based on AutoStore and licensed from NSi—such as IKON DocAccel, Xerox Smart-Documents Travel or KyoCapture—offer this level of ease of administration.

Unlike many other competing document capture product developers, NSi doesn't expect the dealer to perform the initial configuration of the solution. Because the

method for designing processes, or workflows, is so simple, there's no need for the dealer to do this, as any administrator can perform this function without any training. NSI claims that only 30 minutes to an hour is required for the administrator to create the desired workflows, and after seeing the process design firsthand, we think that's a conservative estimate.

Ease of Use



AutoStore is simple to use whether the user is capturing documents from electronic sources, such as network folders, e-mail attachments, FTP servers or the local PC. For routing electronic documents, AutoStore runs as a background service on the user's PC. For example, AutoStore can automatically convert e-mail attachments to PDFs and route them to a specific folder.



Start Workflow Screen

When used to capture paper documents, the solution features a clean user interface that's easy for walk-up users to operate at any compatible MFP, regardless of its make or model. Routing an electronic version of a scanned document into a digital workflow can be performed in just a handful of very basic steps. First, the user places a paper document in the document feeder or on the platen of an MFP and presses the AutoStore button. On the MFP's control panel, the user then selects a workflow, such as Contracts or Customer Orders, which has been previously programmed into the system. The document can be routed to any folder or application to which the user has access.



Customer Invoice

The user then enters metadata (i.e., indexing information), such as the contract number, customer name and client number. After this information has been entered, the user simply presses the MFP's Start button. The MFP captures the documents and AutoStore processes the electronic images and routes them, with the attached metadata, to the predetermined destination where they can be viewed, stored and manipulated.

Compatibility



Another advantage of AutoStore is the wide range of MFPs that are compatible with this solution. NSi AutoStore has the broadest hardware compatibility that BLI has seen from any solution in any category, offering integration with more than 500 TWAIN-compliant scanner and MFP models from nine leading makers, including Fujitsu, HP, Kodak, Konica Minolta, Kyocera Mita, Sharp, Xerox, Ricoh, Savin, Lanier and Gestetner.

What's particularly impressive is that it offers touch-screen integration even with many older models, such as the eight-year-old Ricoh Aficio 1022 (now discontinued), that don't offer a convenient software platform to developers, such as the Embedded Software Architecture (ESA) of newer Ricoh MFPs. With competing third-party scan-capture solutions, a costly add-on kiosk is required to support older MFPs. Also, in addition to these MFP models, NSi AutoStore integrates with the touch-screen control panel on Kodak's Scan Station 500 and Fujitsu's fi-6010N network scanner.

AutoStore works with Windows XP Pro, Vista, Windows Server 2003 and Server 2008; there are no Mac or Linux variants available. Given the dominance of Microsoft's operating system, this is less of an issue, but it should be noted that Mac OS X and Linux have made inroads in the business arena.

Software Integration



AutoStore comes with 32 connectors to back-end applications free of charge, which is more than other scan-capture solutions BLI has evaluated. The company states that it earns its revenues through the sale of AutoStore licenses, so the more third-party applications it supports, the more organizations will want to purchase those licenses. Although third-party developers are free to write their own connectors for AutoStore, NSi only officially endorses those connectors written in-house in order to ensure the smooth operation of AutoStore with back-end software. Otherwise, the company might be unfairly held responsible for a poorly implemented connector.

The list of connectors available at no charge for third-party applications includes Alchemy, DocStar, EMC Application Xtender, EMC Documentum, Feith Systems, Fortis, Hummingbird, Hyland OnBase, IBM CM, IBM FileNet, Interwoven Work-site MP and NT, Interwoven iManage, IXOS, Laserfiche, Lotus Domino.Doc, Lotus Note, Microsoft Exchange, Microsoft Great Plains, Microsoft SharePoint, OpenText Livelink, Ricoh DocumentMall, TRIM Captura, TRIM Context, Westbrook File Magic, Worldox, Xerox DocuShare.

Security



AutoStore 5.0 enables all of the security features offered by the third-party applications with which it integrates. In addition, it offers a number of valuable security features, including data encryption and document authentication, which creates an audit trail. In addition, users can capture content from and store it to secure FTP sites. AutoStore also enables personalized workflows based on user/group attributes, which this solution can retrieve from Microsoft and Novell directory servers.

Company Profile

Vendor:	Notable Solutions, Inc. (NSi)
Phone:	240-683-8400
Web:	www.nsius.com
Status:	Private
2008 Revenues:	Information not available
Employees:	75

Dealer Support and Training



NSi offers Web-based training to dealers' technical support and sales staffs for \$1,000. On-site training is also available, if desired. After the initial training, dealers shouldn't require any additional support from NSi, thanks to the intuitive design of the solution.

Customer Support and Training



Customers with a valid maintenance contract receive unlimited phone and e-mail support. NSi also offers a helpful knowledge base page on its Web site, which includes admin guides and answers to common problems and "how to" guides sorted by topic. In addition, NSi also provides a forum for customers to post questions or areas of discussion to be answered either by software experts or peers. Most other capture programs tested do not offer this added support.

Customer support is available from 9 am to 6 pm Eastern Time. Calls made at various times were answered within seconds. A technical support e-mail sent on a Monday morning was answered late Monday evening with an extensive level of detail.


Documentation



NSi includes five configuration guides with AutoStore, each of which is available as a searchable PDF or as a hard copy at the customer's request. BLI found all of these guides to be very thorough and clearly written, with no assumption that the administrator has any prior knowledge of the solution. In addition, hundreds of screen shots make these documents very easy to follow.


The documentation includes the Quick Reference Guide; the Framework User Guide, which is the general manual for administrators; the Process Components Reference Guide for adding, operating and troubleshooting process components, such as encryption, OCR and watermarks; the Route Components User Guide for configuring AutoStore to work with third-party applications such as Documentum, FileNet and Microsoft Exchange; and the Best Practices Guide, which offers tips for administrators, such as using barcodes, working with content management queues or running AutoStore in a clustered environment using Microsoft Windows Cluster Services.

Global Business Readiness



NSi has offices in the United States and Germany and sells AutoStore worldwide. The administration utility is only available in English, which could be a drawback for international users. However, all front panel operations have flexible multi-language capabilities, according to the company.

Upgrade Path



NSi claims that AutoStore has been tested with as many as 1,000 MFPs connected to a single server without problems, although the company recommends no more than about half that. This compares favorably with competing solutions, which generally can't support more than 250 MFPs per server.

Minor patches and upgrades for AutoStore are offered through the Web on an ongoing basis. Major upgrades are released once a year and are offered free to customers that have purchased an annual maintenance agreement. Some enhancements made to AutoStore since the previous version, 4.6, include the addition of more application connectors, touch-screen compatibility with more MFP models and enhanced OCR performance.