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Cabinet NG Conquers Chaos

By Wayne Kawamoto

A tax code that's easy to understand, a politician not influenced by money and a paperless office. While all three seem impossible, Cabinet NG - an electronic paper filing system that's both intuitive and effective - can at least help you deal with the mounds of paper that accumulate within your company.

The Paper Chase

Using Cabinet NG, you can scan documents, convert them into electronic images and file them in the system's electronic file cabinets. Any document can be scanned, including invoices, purchase requests, bills, credit card charges, estimates and more. You can quickly search for and call up digitized and filed documents.

Cabinet NG effectively organizes electronic documents in virtual file cabinets, which hold file folders, which, in turn, house tabbed groups of documents. You can also virtually "clip" or "staple" documents that need to stay together, even if they aren't scanned or entered at the same time.

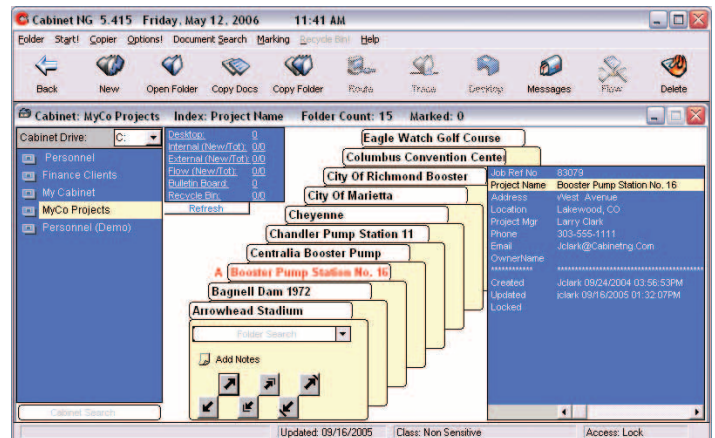
Searches are easy to initiate and perform. You can enter up to five keywords and choose to search all of the text in every document, or perform targeted searches that focus on specific cabinets or file folders.

The Learning Curve

Most people won't have any trouble navigating the system. You select or create the file cabinet, file folder and document tab in which you want a scanned document to reside, select an image format - TIFF, for example - and then scan the document and save it.

While Cabinet NG handles basic picture formats, its exclusive image format, DMX, uses less hard drive space than traditional TIFF files. The system works with any TWAIN-compatible scanner and supports third party scanning software such as Kodak Imaging and eiStream Imaging.

Cabinet NG is designed for a server and work station environment and offers extensive password protection to adequately control access to documents, folders and cabinets. Most people should be able to get the system up and running with the fundamental features with a couple of hours of training. Much of the learning curve involves following company guidelines and naming conventions.



The main screen displays file cabinets and folders, which can be configured to recreate an existing paper filing system.

Thinking Outside the Box

A useful function called the "CNG-Publisher" lets you create documents in other applications, such as Microsoft Word or Excel - or Intuit's QuickBooks - and immediately save and file them in Cabinet NG. If a document can be printed in the program that created it, it can be forwarded to and filed in Cabinet NG as a TIF, DMX or PDF image format file.

Using Windows Explorer, you can drag and drop image files onto a CNG-File icon. The software then asks for a user name, cabinet name and other information, and then it files the document. You can also save and file e-mails by dragging and dropping them through Cabinet's built-in e-mail support feature, which works with MAPI-compliant e-mail programs such as Outlook, Eudora, Pegasus and others.

A plus for companies that use QuickBooks, data entry personnel can create bills and credit card charges and receive payments directly through CNG-Books without accessing QuickBooks. This eliminates the need for duplicate data entry in order to manage and store the document and record the transaction in QuickBooks - a slick and powerful feature. Once in place, the features are straightforward for employees to use: the work lies in the setup and configuration.

Cabinet NG lets you route folders to other people who use the system, which is akin to putting a paper folder in someone else's

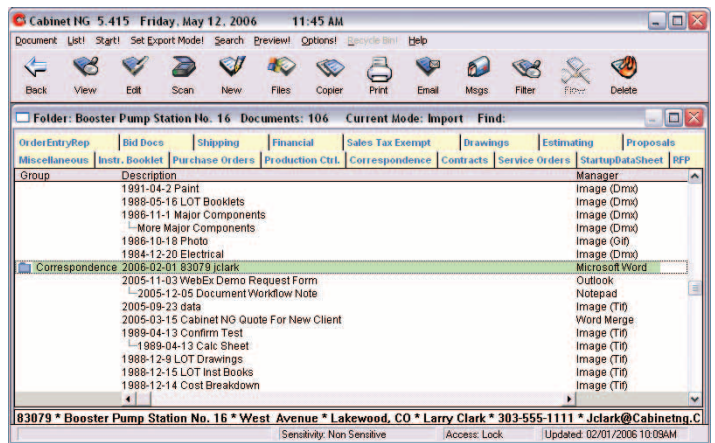
inbox. You can also e-mail documents from Cabinet NG to other folks. According to the company, you don't need to maintain two copies of a document, one on a computer's local hard drive and the other in Cabinet NG.

Administration

If you decide to give Cabinet NG a shot, you'll need to designate someone as a system administrator. The admin installs the software, sets up the file cabinets and document filing groups and creates and assigns access rights. It takes some technical savvy, so choose someone who is comfortable installing and configuring software, working with networks and who knows his or her way around the company's organization and current filing system.

Cabinet NG is flexible enough to mimic an existing filing system. If your company currently files clients alphabetically, by office, color codes or representatives, you can file in the same way within Cabinet NG. In fact, the company recommends that you recreate your existing filing system so it's easier for employees to learn and adapt to the new system. If you have a database of clients, you can also import them into the program via comma delimited text files.

We don't like that the software ships without documentation - instead you have to download a lengthy, 375-page PDF file that you can print out. There's little in the way of instructions with the DVD and no wizard to walk you through the process of installing the server and workstation versions of the program. While both programs are simple to install, configuring them takes some technical know-how and even advice from the company. You can configure Cabinet NG to work on a peer-to-peer network, but the main system has to be set up as a network drive.



Cabinet NG's virtual file cabinets feature folders that further organize documents under tabs.

According to our press contact, the company likes to conduct a Webex session, which typically averages between 30-60 minutes, to help its customers get up and running. The company also offers free online training classes.

Without a doubt, Cabinet NG is a powerful system that can computerize your filing system. It's no silver bullet, but for companies that are swimming in paper and willing to invest the time and training, it will reap benefits.

Requirements and Pricing

Cabinet NG Workstation requires a Pentium III or higher, Windows 2000 or XP-Pro, 256 MB RAM and 100 MB of hard drive space. Server requires Windows 2000/03 Server NTFS and 512 MB RAM. The software sells for \$995 per seat.



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