

Sharpening your competitive advantage with digital fax managed services

Realizing the full benefits of today's global marketplace demands flexibility, responsiveness, and innovation. Yet, most organizations struggle to achieve the core technical infrastructure, operational expertise, and foresight necessary to truly maximize their digital fax and fax-dependent workflow potential. More and more organizations are turning to fax as a managed service to attain their process automation goals.

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Executive summary

Maintaining a competitive edge in today's marketplace is often driven by a company's ability to match IT capabilities with its business strategy and processes.

Faxing continues to be a critical part of daily business processes for organizations in many industries. Organizations turn to digital fax technology to improve processes and fax-dependent workflows, increase communication speed, decrease compliance risk, and improve process automation. These benefits greatly impact the speed and flexibility of operations, but often many companies struggle to achieve them. Several companies find fax to be critical to their business, yet they can't keep pace with changing workflows and business requirements, integrations, and technologies, and they suffer from a lack of internal technical expertise.

Digital fax as a managed service simplifies faxing by combining digital fax technology for automating and streamlining workflows with external resources that manage your fax network on your behalf. This empowers your organization with the expertise and marketplace advantage to focus on what it does best, while eliminating onsite hardware and software complexities and other resource drains that come with running mission-critical faxing operations.

Digital fax managed services helps your business benefit from enhanced agility, increased speed, and improved flexibility and scalability to meet business goals—ultimately ensuring that the benefits reach your bottom line. Partnering with the right digital fax managed services provider will give your organization the marketplace advantage to focus on what it does best.

This white paper references recent fax market research from IDC to explore the ongoing importance of fax technology and uncover how digital fax technology as a managed service can improve the capabilities of your business, overcome the challenges of complex fax implementations, and positively impact your bottom line. When choosing digital fax technology, you must consider not just the technology offered by managed services providers, but also the process and people capabilities from the right partner.

Digital fax: An enabler of modernization and digitization strategies

Not so long ago, suggesting that fax technology was pivotal to digital transformation would appear to be a contradiction in terms. Yet, fax technology has evolved to meet the modern requirements of the digital world. The technology has transitioned from paper-based, standalone fax machines to digital fax servers and cloud-based fax services—and has gained a whole arsenal of new capabilities in the process. In addition to maintaining its unrivalled security, traceability, and auditability for information exchange, the technology has added automation and integration capabilities with enterprise applications to enable completely digital workflows.

Because many business processes are both document-centric and fax-dependent—especially when dealing with customers, suppliers, and other trading partners—it is critical to understand the role of fax technology as an enabler of digital workflows. As enterprises embrace the digital transformation journey, faxing must evolve from inefficient, paper-based methods to modern digital fax technology. These next-generation digital solutions deliver the automation and integration capabilities necessary to create end-to-end digital workflows.

In its recent report [Fax Market Pulse: Trends, Growth and Opportunities](#), IDC analysts state: "Digital fax technology will play a role in transforming an organization's document-centric business workflows by integrating with the document-intensive workflow automation ecosystem, enabling new connections, streamlining secure communications between stakeholders, and contributing to overall digital transformation initiatives."

Building block 1: Understanding the importance of fax in an organization

The recent IDC fax market research report shows that fax volumes are rising—sometimes at remarkable rates—and companies are working hard to move from a paper-based to a digital fax infrastructure. The data from the report begins to underscore the importance of digital fax technology and the transformative role it plays.

Despite the long-standing, popular opinion that fax is an outdated technology, the IDC report states that the opposite is true. Not only is fax thriving around the globe, but nearly half of all surveyed organizations said their fax volumes are growing with year-over-year fax volume average growth of 27 percent. Additionally, a quarter of those organizations reported fax volume growth rates between 50 and 74 percent! As fax use and volumes continue to grow in organizations, so does the strain and demand on the infrastructure and internal resources to support it, adding to the complexity of a deployment.

There are several key factors driving the use of fax technology within organizations. As fax volumes grow, it's particularly important for organizations to understand how and why fax is used, so that strategies can be deployed to support a growing dependence. The key reason for fax usage is to ensure secure information exchange with customers and suppliers globally. There is also a clear understanding of the role that fax plays within mission-critical business processes—especially in the areas of security and compliance.

- **Fax supports enterprise security and compliance requirements.** Fax remains important because it provides an essential means of tracking document transmission, providing a high level of confidence that a document is sent and received with an auditable trail. It offers proven, secure document transmission. Faxed documents are often legally binding, and fax supports compliance with industry regulations (e.g., HIPAA and SOX).
- **Fax is an integral component of business workflows.** Since customers and suppliers continue to use fax, it remains an important component of business processes and is part of document-centric workflows. Because the source or destination of fax content is often linked to back-end systems—such as SAP®, Oracle, electronic medical records, CRM, or document management systems—digital fax solutions are frequently and importantly integrated with back-end applications. Understanding which business processes are fax-dependent is crucial to automating and optimizing those processes with the right partner and solutions.
- **Fax technology is evolving, making it easier to use.** With the availability of solutions such as fax managed services, onsite fax servers, and cloud-based fax services, fax technology has evolved into an effective digital solution that is accessible across the entire organization. Digital fax integrates with email and desktop solutions, making it easier for users to quickly exchange

Establishing a complex implementation to ensure compliance, enable integrations, and support business processes and users requires continuous investment in both specialized technology and internal professionals to implement, monitor, and troubleshoot. It also places a great deal of pressure on the internal resource required to manage the digital fax infrastructure and ensure it can scale and evolve to meet constantly changing business, market, and customer needs.



Building block 2: Understanding how fax volume growth impacts business

But why are fax volumes growing? While the capabilities of digital fax are key for its usage within organizations, it is the ability to deliver on business objectives that respondents to the IDC survey stated was the reason for the growth in fax volumes. The results show that new customer and new market expansion are key reasons for growth, which, in turn, leads to organizations' internal fax expansion. The ability to respond quickly and effortlessly to these business opportunities is critical to success.

Top reasons for fax volume growth

Q. Why have fax volumes increased?



n=85
Source: IDC Fax Survey, February 2017

Failure to respond effectively to customer and employee needs, gaps in internal expertise, and to major business events—such as merger and acquisition activity, system consolidations, and back-end integrations—prompts an organization to reassess how it deploys its fax solution. How can it create a secure and scalable digital fax infrastructure with the control and visibility required with limited internal resources?

Organizations should approach this reassessment with the goal of simplifying and enhancing digital faxing operations to rapidly respond to new business opportunities and workflow requirements. Dynamic integration requirements with enterprise applications require responsiveness to changing business needs. The challenge becomes aligning the right resources—internal and external—to gain the agility required to propel business objectives.

Building block 3: Understanding how digital fax solutions propel business objectives

Many organizations start their journey to a digital fax solution to:

- **Improve productivity/efficiency** of users by making digital fax easy to use with integrated email, desktop applications, web-based applications, MFP devices, and other sources
- **Reduce costs** by eliminating/reducing labor and manual processes with paper-based and inefficient faxing methods; eliminating some or all of the on-premises infrastructure, management, and maintenance with hybrid, cloud, or managed services solutions; reducing paper, phone lines, and modems; eliminating standalone fax machines and related phone lines, supplies, and maintenance
- **Improve TCO** by consolidating all faxing in a single, centralized fax solution, eliminating disparate solutions and improving ROI and IT resource efficiency

However, as organizations optimize these solutions, they benefit from larger total business improvements. Optimized digital fax solutions:

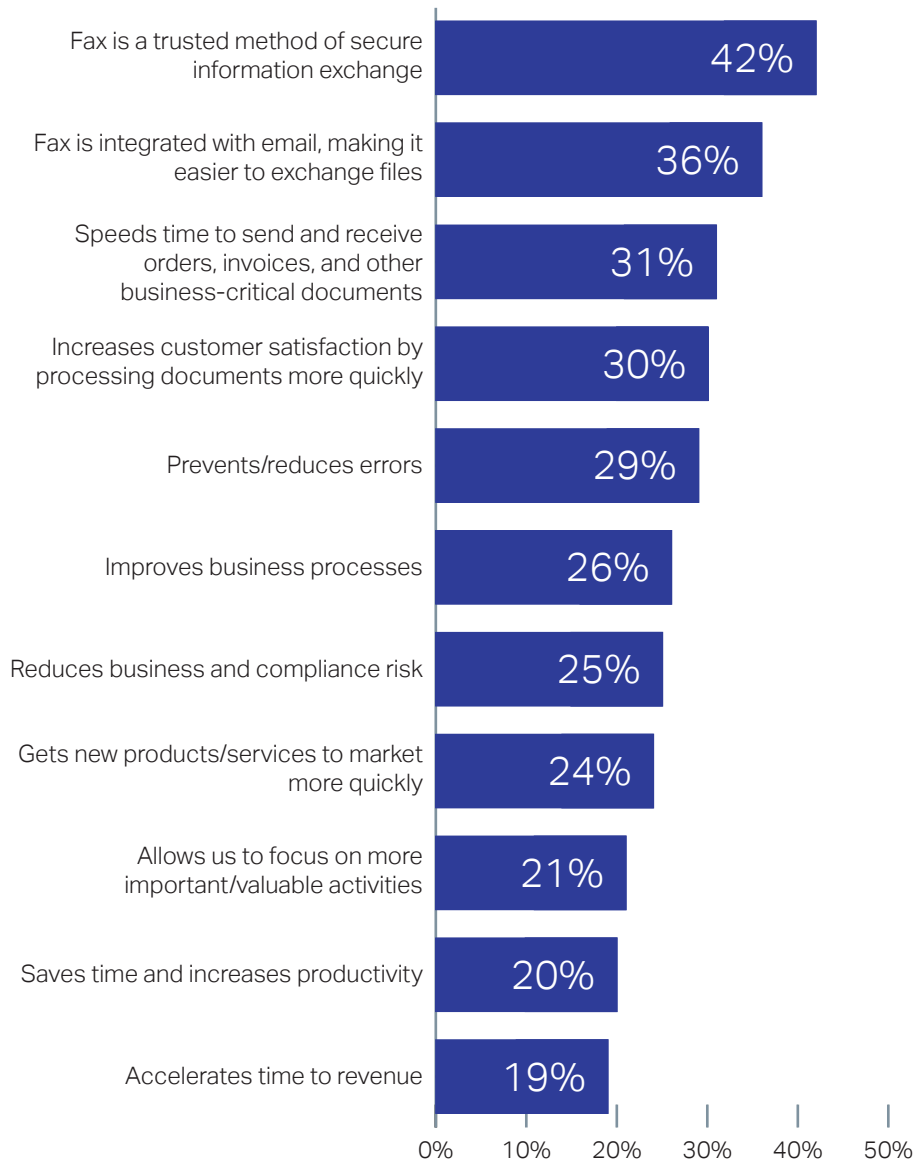
- **Increase the security and compliance** of information exchange to keep information private, secure, and confidential, and to decrease compliance risk and associated fines. In IDC research, 42 percent of respondents indicated that the biggest benefit of fax is the security it provides as a trusted method of information exchange.
- **Increase time to revenue, shortening business cycles** with improved throughput and faster business processes by integrating with enterprise apps and automating paper-based, manual fax processes and fax-dependent workflows. 31 percent of IDC research respondents state that digital fax solutions speed time to exchange content, impacting the bottom line.
- **Improve customer satisfaction** through consistent, reliable, and secure communications which are more efficient and faster to transact. 30 percent of IDC research respondents noted that processing documents faster provides higher levels of customer satisfaction.
- **Support digital transformation and modernization strategies** that impact process automation by improving business processes (26 percent of IDC research respondents) and supporting corporate initiatives.
- **Expand more quickly to new markets and customer segments** with scalable solutions to meet the needs of the organization's growth and expansion.

“Any disruption to fax use within fax-dependent, business-critical workflows could have detrimental outcomes for a process that could ultimately impact a business’ bottom line.”

HOLLY MUSCOLINO, IDC ANALYST

Top benefits of fax usage

Q. What are the top benefits your organization obtains when using fax?



n=200
Source: IDC's Fax Survey, February 2017

What is digital fax managed services?

Digital fax managed services empowers your organization to free up internal resources to focus on core business objectives, eliminate on-premises fax server hardware/software costs and maintenance fees, and fill gaps in internal expertise. It combines the fax technology, integrations, and experts to implement, manage, and monitor your fax implementation. It empowers your organization to reach your business automation goals, improve customer satisfaction through faster document exchange and processing, and support digital transformation and modernization strategies with a powerful digital fax solution.

An effective digital fax managed services solution should provide:

- People: skilled people with both technical and business expertise who can support and deliver a program that meets your current and future business objectives. This includes:
 - Experienced project managers dedicated to your digital fax program
 - Digital fax technology and standards experts
 - 24/7 support
- Processes: best-practice processes for implementing or extending the use of digital fax in your organization, managing your fax solution on an ongoing basis, and quickly meeting new business requirements. The processes should include:
 - Enterprise fax and integration expertise
 - Rapid solution implementation and short time-to-value
 - Systems and program management to perform all day-to-day management of your faxing infrastructure, including systems-health monitoring, data backup, network management, systems administration, database management, and application support
- Technology: the comprehensive infrastructure needed to exchange secure fax communications with business partners, customers, and suppliers, and that takes into account the multiplicity of integrations, and provides reporting and visibility into transactions and processes. This infrastructure should include:
 - Global datacenters and infrastructure to support the demands of your business
 - Reliable and secure fax transmission, with unlimited capacity to meet the volume requirements of your business
 - Enterprise application integrations expertise to gain the advantage of scaling up integration resources to ensure you meet the budget and time-frame requirements of your fax automation projects



Building the business case for digital fax managed services

It is clear that organizations understand the mission-critical nature of their fax solution to enable effective business operations and drive business growth. As fax volumes grow, so does the cost and complexity of managing that infrastructure. Businesses report that 'if fax stops, so does our business,' so fax performance and availability become front and center for security and business continuity. And the larger the impact on the overall business, the more critical the right solution and deployment model becomes.

Digital fax managed services simplifies faxing by combining the most comprehensive digital fax technology for automating and streamlining workflows with the best partner for managing your fax network on your behalf.

Digital fax as a managed services provides a low risk, high reward means to offload the complexity and management of a fax network implementation to a trusted technology partner.

Digital fax managed services enhances agility by:

- **Shielding you from complexity**

The technical infrastructure of your deployment will change on a regular basis as standards constantly evolve, new integrations require a refresh of technology to meet new business requirements, your business wins new customers, and you work with new suppliers. Managed services insulates your company from ongoing technical complexity by placing the responsibility for supporting a multiplicity of standards and translating between them in the hands of the managed services provider.

- **Enhancing the agility of your resources**

Whether faced with competing or new priorities, workforce churn, or gaps in internal know-how, your fax server environment expertise transitions from a single-threaded internal resource to a team. This frees your team to focus on other strategic IT initiatives. Managed services gives you a competitive advantage by enabling your company to focus on what it does best—without the distraction of supporting a complex fax server infrastructure of integrations and connectivity. It provides technical and support solutions designed to help you securely and quickly scale to meet your growing business needs.

- **Increasing customer satisfaction through faster business process and workflow automation**

Tighter integrations with enterprise applications and back-end systems provide increased throughput and workflow automation capabilities that allow you to do business faster. By improving efficiency and the rate of secure information exchange, you can increase how quickly you react to customer communications. This improves customer satisfaction by allowing you to act on opportunities faster and support accelerated growth.

- **Supporting digital transformation and modernization initiatives with a trusted digital fax solution partner**

Transforming document-intensive workflows, especially those related to interactions with customers and other stakeholders, offers the opportunity to drive competitive differentiation and bottom-line results. Digital fax technology plays a pivotal role in modernizing and transforming document-intensive workflows by eliminating inefficiencies and error-prone processes, while improving the security of communications to decrease risk. Choosing the right partner is key to success.

- **Strengthening flexibility and scalability to meet business goals**

By centralizing and consolidating all faxing with digital fax managed services, you're backed by a global infrastructure and can gain greater visibility across all faxing operations for end users, enterprise applications, and workflows—plus the right technology, people, and processes to future-proof your digital faxing needs.

Summary

Fax technology is core to many document-centric business processes. It is evolving to take its place in the digital world. The result, according to IDC, is that fax volumes are growing and companies are moving toward a digital fax infrastructure. This gives organizations in industries such as manufacturing, financial services, healthcare, and legal the opportunity to reassess how they deliver the fax services the business requires. Managed services for digital fax has evolved to remove the cost and complexity from digital fax implementations, while increasing the capabilities, security, and responsiveness within the solution.

Digital fax managed services:

- Combines technology, process, and people to deliver robust digital fax solutions
- Tackles the issues that prevent companies from achieving the benefits of process automation and efficiency, such as constantly evolving technology and standards, lack of resources, and integration expertise
- Delivers enhanced agility by shielding you from complexity and extending the capabilities of your IT department
- Increases speed by delivering rapid implementation and supporting accelerated growth
- Reduces investment risk and better future-proofing of your digital fax solution
- Should be provided by a provider who has:
 - The right people—expertise in implementation, upgrades, integrations, fax technology, as well as technical skills
 - The right processes—full program management, ongoing monitoring and reporting, and flexibility
 - The right technology—a global infrastructure, comprehensive integration capabilities, and the ability to improve automation efficiency in the process

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