

Document Imaging Report

Business Trends on Converting Paper Processes to Electronic Format

Infosource SA ● Geneva, Switzerland ● <http://www.documentimagingreport.com>

May 29, 2020

THIS JUST IN!

CAPTURE 2020 CANCELLED

Already Rescheduled for 2021! Online version possible this year

Sadly, **Infosource/HSA** have decided to cancel their annual conference due to Covid-19, moving it to September 8-9, 2021.

"It has been a difficult decision," said Harvey Spencer, lead software analyst for Infosource. "Initially we hoped to hold it at a new venue at Eaglewood Resort (www.eaglewoodresort.com), close to Chicago's O'Hare Airport, after 15 years in New York. "We felt that this would dovetail with the new ownership of Harvey Spencer Associates (HSA) by Infosource who acquired us last December. Companies who have sponsored or attended including **Open Text, IBM and Microsoft** have stopped conferences until 2021. Illinois seems to be behind New York in handling the Virus and I am not convinced that NY will be back to normal by September so I had been becoming increasingly concerned that even if the conference site was open and we succeeded in holding it, the experience would be less than optimal. A key part of our conference is providing an opportunity to network with one's peers in a neutral setting. So even if we did try to hold it, this was likely to be constrained. In the event, Eaglewood, which is part of the Benchmark Group of Hotels, kindly offered to let us reschedule for next year. So we would like to announce our NEW scheduled conference for September 8-9 2021 at the Eaglewood Resorts.

"For this year in September we hope to create some virtual round table webinar sessions to discuss the market and other areas of interest — stay tuned".

Parascript Talks Voting, Unattended Machine Learning, and COVID's Effect on BPOs

DIR had the opportunity to speak with **Parascript's** Greg Council, VP, Marketing and Product Development, about a range of topics. We covered a lot of ground, here's a recap.

Vote By Mail

Sparked by a Parascript blog post (see the Learn More section for the link), *DIR* asked if there are any technical reasons to prevent voting by mail. This isn't a political newsletter, so we'll just stick with "Not really."

A key concern is signature verification, where manual verification can be costly and error-prone. Automatic signature verification, which analyzes signatures against authentic references, is already in widespread use in the banking industry to evaluate signatures on checks. Council explained that Parascript's SignatureXpert is used in the state of Colorado (the state uses Parascript software for location and verification of signatures on all ballots,) "the tool can be trained and can detect common signature reference points in a person's signature. That means that as a person ages, has a handwriting change due to illness, or is simply in a hurry; automated signature verification can use those clues to identify the signature as valid."

The accuracy is higher than for poll workers, who volunteer their time but aren't experts in matching signatures stored in a database with mail-in ballots.

Of course there are logistical issues of increasing infrastructure to handle more mail-in ballots, but the technology (including digital signature verification) and processes are in place and working (Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington, and Utah conduct all elections by mail). However, the likelihood of voter fraud via vote by mail is very low and very rare.

COVID's Effect on Parascript and BPOs

Council noted that stay-at-home orders severely impacted the ability of manual-labor reliant BPOs to function. While they have always thought of automation as a "one-day in the future" project, it remains cheaper to "throw bodies at the problem" by hiring more data-entry staff or scanner personnel.

When India locked down with four hours of notice, Council said "[BPOs] were freaking out." Given the infrastructure in countries like the Philippines and India, it's not always feasible to work at home. BPOs are beginning to think of ways to create a more home-based workforce. With claims processing work, security concerns mean much of the work needs to be done within the BPO's facility.

Before the COVID crisis, the pain (and cost) of automating processes was higher than continuing to use manual processes. BPOs will use this crisis to move towards automation so they will be able to function if COVID lingers and during the next pandemic. The main push is how to make their business more resilient and all evidence points to BPOs accelerating their adoption of technology, but they are first looking at ways to swing business processes to work-from-home labor vs. implementing automation. Council also recently spoke with a customer who recently implemented claims automation for a client, "That client's operations were not negatively impacted vs. the clients that were still using manual data entry."

Council notes that COVID hasn't had a huge impact on Parascript, as business is flat to slightly up. The morning we spoke, Gartner had issued a revised IT spending expectation for 2020, that IT spending would be \$300 billion less than expected. When asked, Council wasn't entirely convinced, "We've seen some engagements accelerated because automation benefits became immediately obvious. Discretionary or 'nice-to-have' spending may lose out to spending on key processes and technology." While overall spending could shrink with budget cuts, he thinks that COVID-19 will have more impact on changing the pie slices rather than the overall size of the IT spending pie itself.

Smart Learning and Hyperautomation

Parascript's smart-learning has been around since the summer of 2018 and the company is pushing the concept to expand its range of applications. It works well with the eternal low-hanging fruit of the automation tree, invoicing and accounts payable, where the information is the same but in different locations on the documents. Council says that the software can train and configure automatically (for certain applications). Council stated that the software "did in 6 hours what our R & D staff of PhDs and experts would have taken 6 months to do in the past."

Document Imaging Report

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DIR is the leading executive report on managing documents for e-business.

Areas we cover include:

1. Document Capture
2. OCR/ICR, AI and Machine Learning
3. RPA
4. ECM
5. Records Management
6. Document Output
7. BPM

DIR brings you the inside story behind the deals and decisions that affect your business.

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Council also pointed out that “OCR is not intelligent capture. It is a tool, not an end result.” Now, that’s an obvious statement for most of you reading this. However, he also notes that because of the introduction of RPA “as a magical solution for automation, it’s easy to confuse the market.” There are new vendors in the market faking it until they (maybe) make it, “deep learning sounds good, but it can be a mirage.”



Greg Council, VP
Marketing & Product
Development

Council adds, “There are companies out there that are pushing deep learning as a silver bullet for everything, but it’s just another tool that has its own strengths and weaknesses. So relying solely on deep learning will not always produce good results. We use deep learning neural networks and a lot of other machine learning algorithms to overcome weaknesses and reduce the need for a mountain of data.”

DIR’s takeaway is that it’s incumbent on this industry’s vendors not to oversell the capabilities of their tools (never a great idea anyway, I’ve found).

DIR asked a final question about hyperautomation, which seems . . . hyper. While acknowledging that the data capture and automation industry is still solving many of the same basic problems as 30 years ago and it’s a little buzz-wordy, Council did make a good argument in favor of the phrase, “the real problem is overselling what’s possible in the present, but having a vision to aspire to is needed to move an industry forward.”

Learn More:

Rush to Vote by Mail Requires Decisions on Signature Verification (https://bit.ly/Parascript_eVote)

Signature Verification Software Can Address Fear of Voting Fraud (https://bit.ly/Parascript_eSig)

DIR EXTRA! **REGIONAL UPDATE ON EGYPTIAN MARKET**

Infosource Regional Manager reports on the market in Egypt and the effects of Covid-19.

Check out our DIR blog to read this exclusive report (<https://www.documentimagingreport.com/?p=6938>)

May 29, 2020

EDITORIAL

Welcome Back, Duhon

I type this with a mix of feelings — déjà vu for diving back into this industry with both feet, gratitude for the trust Ralph and Infosource have placed in me, and a wee bit of nerves because I haven’t done this in over a decade. Fear of falling on one’s face is a great motivator.

Some of you know me, but here’s a quick recap for those who don’t. I joined AIIM as an editorial assistant for *inform* (AIIM’s member magazine at the time) in February 1995. When I became the assistant editor, over half of my time was spent writing and editing *DOC. 1*, AIIM’s newsletter (and sending via fax - FAX! I feel old - on Friday nights). Over the years, I helped usher the magazine through a few designs, ditto AIIM’s various newsletters, started and hosted the AIIM webinar program for nearly eight years, wrote and edited multiple wall posters, helped create and then managed AIIM’s online community, and then transitioned into more of a marketing role for training, research, and events.

Which is what I’ve been doing for a decade now. What I discovered about marketing, especially content or inbound marketing, is that the goals I had as an editor for my readers are (or should be) identical for marketers: help someone make a decision/improve their life by providing them with useful information.

I spent four years with an inbound agency trying to penetrate the copier dealer market and then the past 18 months or so freelancing. I learned a lot during that time, including that copier dealers are an odd bunch.

One common strand throughout my career is that everything I’ve ever written or assigned, regardless of the role I was in at a particular time, has had one goal: be useful. As I used to joke about the magazine, “Ain’t nobody reading this for fun.”

I’ll do my best to carry that professional foundation here, to serve you. What are you interested in reading about? What do you want to see in these pages? Online?

You can find me on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/in/bduhon) and on Twitter

(@bduhon, warning, that is me, not just professional me). And, of course, via email: bduhon@documentimagingreport.com. I generally ignore my phone for anything but scheduled calls, so your best chance of touching base is via one of those three spots.

In my career I've spent more time writing about document management, the cloud, scanners and MFPs, automation, and the various and sundry other tools and trends in this industry than that fresh-faced 23 year old ever would have suspected. Yet I find myself excited.

I'm looking forward to catching back up with the industry; reconnecting with old friends and meeting new ones. I'm less excited about wading through whatever the current crop of buzzwords is these days, created as a new way to "generate excitement" around the same business challenges the industry's been attempting to solve for three decades. But, I'm open-minded too, so who knows, maybe "digital transformation" isn't just lazy marketing-speak because getting specific is too hard.

I look forward to learning from you and continuing to provide sharp, interesting copy that keeps you up-to-date on the industry.

Thanks for reading,
Bryant

Comments, criticisms, and witticisms welcomed. [I may or may not have been humming "Welcome Back, Kotter" as I typed the title.]

Worldwide Scanner Sales Projected to Dip

Document Scanner sales in North America, Western Europe, and the Middle East and Africa (MEA) held strong through the first three months of 2020. Meanwhile, sales in Eastern Europe and Latin America showed significant decline even in advance of major effects from COVID-19 complications, which are expected to drastically affect sales in at least Q2 and Q3 of this year.

These are the numbers recently published by **Infosource**, which also recently updated its forecasts through 2023.

Distributed scanner sales, which may have received a boost from work-from-home orders, were strong in the regions that did well, but so

were production sales. By the time the effects of COVID-19 were gaining steam in mid-March, many vendors reported that their Q1 numbers had already been made. In Latin America, political and economic unrest was already surfacing in some countries even prior to COVID-19 really hitting that region hard, plus a large tender in Brazil that was mostly fulfilled in 2019 had expired. Eastern Europe, which is largely driven by sales in Russia, was also likely affected by the variance of tenders.

Worldwide scanner sales, in terms of units shipped, were basically flat when compared to both Q1 and Q4 of 2019. This was boosted by a 9% growth in YOY sales and a 7% growth in sequential quarter sales in North America and a 4% growth in both metrics in Western Europe. By contrast, Latin America saw a 22% decline in YOY quarterly sales and a 25% dip in sequential quarter sales. Eastern Europe saw even more drastic declines.



Infosource forecasts project a fairly steep drop in sales across the world, at least over the next two years, with North America and Western Europe bouncing back faster as their more mature economies recover with Eastern Europe, Latin America and MEA all still struggling to reach 2019 sales levels even in 2023.

Part of this has to do with projected slower economic recovery in less developed regions and part has to do with an overall conversion to more electronic processes, which help eliminate human contact, and thus will be attractive during quarantine restrictions.

For more information on Infosource document scanner sales data and forecasts, please contact mnicholson@infosource.ch

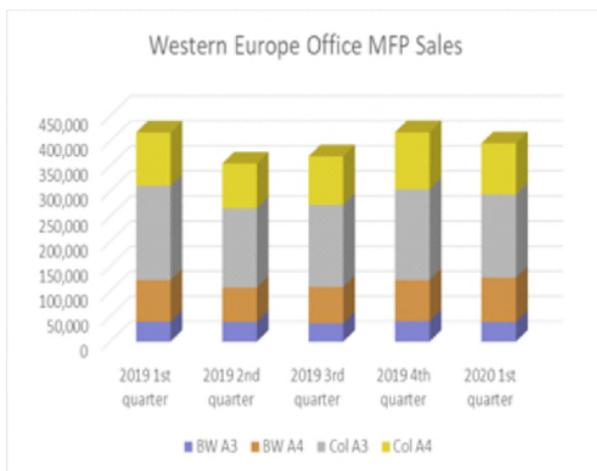
Reported by Ralph Gammon, Senior Analyst, Infosource

Q1 Office MFP Sales Take Initial Hit in Western Europe

The effects of Covid-19 on markets had been expected to be only limited in terms of Q1 2020 sales, with lockdowns in Western Europe implemented late on in the period. In the event, results were mixed in terms of industries, with the office MFP market performing rather better than some others, although down by around 5% across the region as a whole. Single function page printer sales fared worse (-19%) as did the large format and production print markets.

Some brands were affected from relatively early on in the quarter by supply chain issues, with product shortages from the effects of the coronavirus on manufacturing in China. On the other hand, a scramble to equip users newly working from home with the devices they needed resulted in reported clear-outs of lower-end models available in the distribution channel. The inkjet market was down by less than 5% overall, while personal scanner sales were flat in Q1 2020. However, personal toner-based MFP sales dropped 10% compared to the year-ago quarter.

Some countries experiencing the worst health crises saw some of the largest declines – office MFP sales saw the largest drop in Spain (-25%), with the UK at -12%, but much less of a decline in the other majors – France (-2%), Germany (-8%) and Italy (-5%). Several countries including Belgium and Netherlands reported flat sales and there was growth in a few.



It is anticipated that markets will be severely impacted in Q2 2020 in Western Europe, with a large proportion of offices and workplaces either closed or minimally staffed and the

majority of employees working from home for much of the period. For the office market, A3 sales are expected to see the largest effect, with most activity centred around online sales of lower-cost A4 devices. Office print volumes will inevitably tumble during the period, in spite of any increased output from home demand.

The publication of GDP data for Q1 2020 provided some initial indications of the severity of the economic downturn as multiple countries reported a negative trend. France and Spain were down more than 5%, and EU countries overall -3.5%. Double-digit declines are anticipated in Q2 2020, with attention focussed on gradually opening up businesses and workplaces. Social distancing measures such as staff working alternate periods and shifts, plus a larger proportion continuing to work from home are likely to mean only a gradual ramping up of activity in the office market moving into Q3. Nevertheless, there will be pent-up demand from projects already planned before and during the lockdowns with increasing activity anticipated following the European summer holidays.

As the recovery continues, new ways of working should provide office MFP manufacturers with opportunities to develop new business and solutions in terms of digital transformation of business processes, cloud-based services and support for mixed office/home working, helping to offset the decline in print volumes that was already a significant concern prior to Covid-19.

Reported by Fiona Macbeth, Senior Analyst, Infosource

LEAD Technologies to Release LEADTOOLS 21 This Summer

Since we last spoke with **LEAD Technologies'** Greg Kieslich, Business Development Manager, nearly two years ago, the company has been focused on continually improving its LEADTOOLS SDK and adding many new features. We caught up recently at AIIM 2020.

Kieslich noted that 2019 was a record year for LEAD and that sales for 2020 thus far [Note: pre-COVID impact] are even stronger. LEAD has been developing document, medical, and imaging technology for three decades now, with version 21 of LEADTOOLS coming out this summer.

Advancements in AI are the common theme among many of the focal points for the upcoming release. These include:

- **New Additions to the Document Recognition Toolkits**
 - Document Analyzer
 - Handwriting Recognition Engine (ICR)
 - PDF Enhancements
 - Expanded Barcode Recognition
 - Document Compare
 - High Level Document Viewer
- **Major Enhancements to the Medical Toolkit**

Artificial intelligence: Says Kieslich, “Last September, we announced a new AI-based patent for forms recognition.” The title of the patent is “*Apparatus, Method, and Computer-readable Medium for Recognition of a Digital Document.*” According to the text, it involves using “advanced computer vision techniques to identify elements in images. Then, AI uses the elements to accurately determine the type of form.”

Intelligent Document Analyzer: LEAD’s investment in AI and machine learning has driven a lot of the power and features in the SDK. This is showcased in the upcoming Document Analyzer SDK, which will allow developers to extract data from documents with rule-based configurations. This enables intelligent extraction of text or paragraphs from documents based on the rules supplied. Kieslich shared a preview. “We’ve improved our built-in functionality for smart data extraction,” he said. “The ability to find key phrases working with structured/unstructured forms—invoices, bills of lading, receipts—where there is some structure, but it changes between files. Our advancements in machine vision have led to the development of the upcoming Document Analyzer complete with smart search and extraction capabilities that allow for automated data mining. Users can create dynamic rules to automatically find critical and confidential information, and from there it can be automatically highlighted, redacted, or stored. This allows for the highly accurate removal of sensitive information without the need for manual review or templates.”

Powerful Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) Engine: Regarding ICR, Kieslich notes that LEAD has gotten a lot of inquiries, as there are no real reliable solutions to the issue of handwriting currently on the market. “So, we took the plunge and have a dedicated team

now that developed our own engine powered by LEAD’s advanced machine learning,” he said. “Currently, most engines really only support handwritten letters that are separated and not overlapping; they do a poor job with cursive.”

Kieslich added that the ICR engine in LEADTOOLS 21 will be a big breakthrough. “The full power and capability of our ICR engine will be a part of the V21 fall release. With the ability to implement document cleanup first and then handle the handwriting recognition on any type of paper or form, it is going to make waves in the industry.”

No Limits to LEADTOOLS PDF: Support for developers working with PDF has always been an important part of LEADTOOLS. Kieslich tells us that with the release of V21, developers will gain access to a more comprehensive PDF SDK. “Our dev team at LEAD has put together a complete set of PDF tools for this release. We have support for PDF attachments and portfolio, annotations, digital signatures, redaction, encryption, initial view settings, bookmarks, optimization, extraction of text, image, and links and so much more.”

Out-of-Bounds Barcodes. The LEAD barcode engine offers something unique for the market. “So far, we’ve focused on 1D and 2D barcodes and the standard barcode libraries,” Kieslich said. “The barcode engine in version 21 will expand beyond the standards.”

Kieslich said customer demand drove the expansion. “A lot of customers were telling us they had 1D barcodes that couldn’t be read, and they were asking for help,” he said. “After a little homework, we found that there are distortions and small things outside of the standard that were causing issues. We addressed this by making the barcode recognition engine more intelligent and able to go outside the scope of the standard (while still following the standard). As a result, barcodes that have been generated slightly differently from the standards can still be read.”

Increasingly Important Medical HTML5 Viewer. LEAD has developed a very strong medical imaging toolkit over the years that includes an HTML5 Medical Web Viewer. Recently, LEAD has seen a push into telehealth and teleradiology (which will only grow in today’s climate), which has created even more interest in the HTML5 viewer. LEAD continues to

enhance and add features: “3D support for the web viewer has been added in version 21,” Kieslich said. “We also did a lot of work with structured display, panoramic view, and both single and double cut planes. Our 3D HTML5 Viewer for dental records has also been received very well.”

How LEADTOOLS is Licensed

A license is required for both development and deployment. LEAD emphasizes licensing flexibility and attempts to accommodate all business models and use cases. License terms can be customized to reflect the limited use of specific functions. Standard options include per user, per concurrent user, per server, per multi-user, or mobile device. Site, enterprise, and subscription-based licenses are also available.

DIR asked about how the cloud impacts the SDK. Kieslich explained that many new and existing customers are actively deployed to the cloud across various platforms including Azure, AWS, Google Cloud, etc. and he expects the number to continue to increase. Cloud deployments are licensed based on logical cores, users, or consumption/pages processed.

LEAD provides developers a free evaluation of their entire SDK on their website. They also provide free technical support even while evaluating. Currently, the Document Analyzer SDK is in beta testing and LEAD is offering live demos to anyone interested.

For more information:

<https://www.leadtools.com/downloads>

Ephesoft Releases Semantik Invoice

The First in a Series of Planned Cloud-Based Applications

Ephesoft, Inc. launched Semantik Invoice earlier this month. The cloud-based “content acquisition and enrichment solution” extends the company’s cloud-based offerings and promises 97% accuracy out-of-the-box (well, out-of-the-cloud). It is the first manifestation of the ISV’s Context-Driven Productivity (CDP) platform, which was announced earlier this year [see [DIR 2/28/20](#)].

Ephesoft anticipates that this will be the first in a series of cloud-based CDP apps. The underlying

promise of these apps will be its simplicity and fast ramp up of a cloud environment combined with the ability to add context to a business’ data.

Ike Kavaz, founder and CEO, met with *DIR* to discuss the company’s new product and future plans. “The main challenge of collecting data is making the relevant connections between data and business processes,” said Kavaz. Ephesoft identifies relationships between data with its Semantik Extraction tool, which is designed to add value over time.

Accounts Payable departments often struggle with large volumes of invoices, purchase orders and other financial documents, with many companies still manually processing them. Therefore, invoices are low-hanging fruit, which is one reason it was the first CDP app launched.

Kavaz explained how Semantik Invoice differs from the company’s existing capture product, “Transact is like SAP – it’s very capable and highly customizable. Semantik is more like Salesforce – it’s fast, cloud-based and you can start using it in minutes. The Semantik Platform offers a different set of values for customers as the market shifts and adapts to new ways of working.”

Simplicity of Rollout and Ease-of-Use Key to Product

The new product can be used by a company of any size. The product is built on AWS, so it’s easy to add additional capacity as-needed. “The question isn’t one of company size,” says Kavaz, “but rather how fast does a customer want to start using the solution. If a business needs an accounts payable system and they don’t want to spend a lot of setup time, Semantik is for them.” As documents and users are added and more processing power is needed, that can automatically be added.

Of course, many businesses will require a more customizable solution (or are restricted by various regulations from using cloud software). Transact is the choice for customers that need or want an on-premise or hybrid cloud solution that can be configured by a third-party partner or use Ephesoft’s Professional Services.

Kavaz speculates that with the COVID-19 pandemic and a volatile economy, organizations looking for cloud solutions will naturally gravitate to solutions like Semantik Invoice. “With COVID-19 and work from home,

no one wants on-premise solutions going forward. Technology is moving to cloud; 90% will be on cloud.” While DIR expects that the current “never going back to the office” mania is overblown, there will be more telework in the future and the cloud isn’t going away as a software tool delivery platform.

The low-code/no code aspect of this cloud app will simplify roll-out. Like any other cloud app, you don’t need IT or (usually) lots of training on the user side. Kavas notes that there can be a lot of training needed for customers with more robust solutions like Transact. However, “Semantik users haven’t needed more than a few minutes of training. After they log in, they are guided through the process with instruction bubbles.”

AP departments or the CEO can identify a need for the solution and, because cloud subscription services (can often) pay out of operating costs rather than the capital budget, quickly invest in the solution. Like every AP automation solution, the automation also can eliminate the need for more staff (and adds zero additional burden on IT departments).

The speed to begin using it is basically “how fast an accounting clerk can configure and start using it.” It remains to be seen if more training will be needed as more capabilities and features are added.

DIR asked about the 97% accuracy figure and training to improve the rate and avoid exceptions. Kavas claims “97% accuracy is what customers get today when they sign up. The first version is 97% accurate and we already have methods in place to enhance accuracy and add fields – eventually to 100% accuracy. We’re simplifying the user experience using AI and machine learning to take care of the heaving lifting.”

What Does It Cost and What’s Next?

The product is the product, whether you process hundreds of invoices a week or millions. Pricing is based on tiers and is easily scalable. Ephesoft notes that the solution should reduce AP processing costs at least 30%.

While there are additional apps planned, Kavas isn’t ready to announce what is next. The company is a partner-driven organization and plans to meet with partners and work through a long list of use cases – just the priority list will keep them busy for a year or two.

About Context Driven Productivity (CDP)

I’ll never get this acronym right and keep calling it CBD to the end of time. *DIR* sometimes looks askance at acronyms, especially those used by a single vendor. During our conversation, Kavas and *DIR* both agreed that they aren’t fans of “digital transformation” without adding intelligent and contextual (or semantic) data. Kavas further noted that it’s not happening and that many of these projects fail, “even RPA companies have seen a 50% failure rate. Why are these projects failing? We boiled it down to connected data. We didn’t come up with the name for the sake of it. We believe contextual data is key to connecting the customer. Many of our larger global advisory and consultancy partners like Grant Thornton agree that digital process automation needs context to maximize productivity.”

“When we talk to customers about using context driven productivity tools, the reception has been good,” continued Kavas. “Other companies are doing it wrong. Without adding context to data, there’s no way to see a 360-degree view of your data, gain insights, customer trends and valuable information to keep a competitive edge.”

For more information:

<https://www.documentimagingreport.com/?p=6904>;
<https://ephesoft.com/products/semantik-invoice/>

MICROSOFT RAMPED UP ITS RPA EFFORTS WITH THIS WEEK’S ACQUISITION OF SOFTOMOTIVE

The acquisition complements **Microsoft’s** internal RPA development efforts, which it first announced at last fall’s Ignite conference for developer and ISV partners. This included renaming its Microsoft Flow business process automation tool “Microsoft Power Automate.” This was followed up recently launch of UI FLOW, which enabled RPA within Power Automate.

Softomotive is a 15-year-old company with more than 8,000 customers worldwide that offers both attended desktop robots and unattended server robots. Power Automate runs on the cloud, which makes it best suited for unattended applications. Microsoft’s increased RPA efforts should also complement its increased capture efforts, which include automated data capture capabilities included in Project Cortex [see *DIR* 11/15/19], which is now slated for release into general available early this summer.