

Practice More Productively with Time Matters® 9.0 Practice Management Software

Author: Robert Rice
35-45 Consulting Group, LLC
www.3545consulting.com

White Paper

Executive Summary

In a paperless office the most efficient method to move paper between people is not to move the paper at all, but rather to move its e-paper copy. But how are documents best transferred to users? What is the best method? What are the main considerations? This white paper reviews the challenges and methods of paperless mail distribution and makes concrete suggestions using Time Matters®/Practice Advantage® to most efficiently distribute mail with accuracy and accountability.

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35-45 Consulting Group, LLC

120 E. FM 544 Suite 72
PMB 277
Murphy, TX 75094

Tel: 888-866-3545
Fax: 877.523.0008

<http://www.3545consulting.com>

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Paperless Efficiency

In paper-driven workflows, physical paper arrives at an office and is manually distributed to the intended recipient. In some offices multiple copies of each document are made and then multiple recipients are given copies of the documents. Paperless offices need analogous systems of distribution to work properly.

The cost of shuffling paper from desk to desk is high in terms of man-hours. Paperless distribution from the front desk to the intended recipient(s) greatly reduces the overall cost involved in administering the document. If paper is scanned but still distributed manually, then the full benefit of the paperless office is not realized.

The goal of paperless distribution is to reduce the amount of paper being shuffled from one desk to another and in and out of the filing cabinets. Paper should be scanned when it comes in the door and is then immediately filed. The electronic copy of the document is subsequently distributed to the intended recipient(s) without cluttering desktops and without needing to be collected and filed at a future date. Paperless distribution also lowers the incidence of lost documents. Attorney desktops can become “black holes” for documents and client files. Paperless distribution re-routes the flow of paper directly into the filing cabinets lowering the overall cost of filing, un-filing, re-filing and searching for misplaced documents.

Paper to the People

The question then becomes how best to get electronic copies of the paper to the recipient(s.) The immediate reaction of most users (and many IT professional alike) is to solve the distribution question with email. Email, however, generally proves to be a poor solution for this kind of distribution.

The first issue regarding email is that most users already receive a very high load of email every day. Funneling e-paper through this channel burdens an already overtaxed resource. The movement of many hundreds of new emails (with large graphical attachments) also serves to bloat the email program’s database contributing to instability and slowness.

There is also the issue of diffusion. When multiple recipients are designated for e-paper sent via email, there are multiple copies of the document residing in multiple inboxes. This not only contributes to bloat but also leads to users to frequently saving multiple copies of the documents under different names and in different locations. Responsibility and accountability are also diffused since it is not always clear who is supposed to perform what actions and there is no clear way to monitor results and status.

The ideal distribution system would process the scanned mail directly into the Document Management System (DMS) - auto-naming the document into the correct folder while also distributing the document to the correct recipient(s) in an auditable and accountable way.

Processing Incoming Documents

Time Matters can use various features such as the document list or the review feature to distribute documents without paper and without resorting to email. To better understand how documents should be distributed using Time Matters, it is instructive to analyze incoming documents as a whole.

The main points of entry for paper documents and the usual physical systems to deal with them in a law firm are:

- **Mail**
The U.S. Postal Service delivers once daily. Support staff member(s) open and separate the mail. Documents are copied and hand-delivered to each desk. Documents are later collected to be filed.
- **Fax**
Faxes arrive at irregular intervals throughout the day. In most offices, there is a central “inbox” of faxes which is processed and distributed by a responsible support staff member. Faxes are later collected and filed.
- **Email**
Emails with case-specific attachments arrive throughout the day in various formats. Some users save the attachments into the client’s folder but most users simply leave the attachments on the email
- **Delivery/Courier**
Deliveries arrive a few times throughout the day. Support staff members(s) open and distribute the deliveries. Paper is later collected and filed.
- **Banker’s Boxes**
Large deliveries of boxes are usually related to the discovery/production phase of litigation or to large transactional or IP cases. Boxes are brought in and set up in a “war room” to plan the case.

In a paperless office the ideal systems for each of these entry points would be:

Mail

Each piece of case-relevant mail is scanned, profiled in the Time Matters document management system (DMS) by using the TMSave features in Adobe Acrobat and paperlessly distributed to the intended recipient(s). Originals are immediately filed.

Fax

Faxes can either be scanned in PDF format after arriving using a scanner in a similar system to mail, or an Internet Fax provider can be used. Internet Fax services are subscription services that provide a fax number. All faxes received at that number are converted into an electronic format (preferably Adobe PDF) and emailed to a pre-selected email address - thus removing the need for the scanning step.

Email

Documents attached to emails received are immediately saved into the client’s folder and profiled in the Time Matters DMS using the TMSave feature.

Delivery/Courier

(Similar to Mail) Each case-relevant document delivered is scanned upon receipt, profiled in the Time Matters DMS by using the TMSave features in Adobe Acrobat and paperlessly distributed to the intended recipient(s). Originals are immediately filed.

Banker’s Boxes

Usually these are not scanned into Time Matters but rather a specialized litigation support database handles these documents. If the volume is small, they might be entered into Time Matters.

Paperless Document Distribution

Once the documents are received and converted into an electronic format, they need to be distributed to their intended recipient(s).

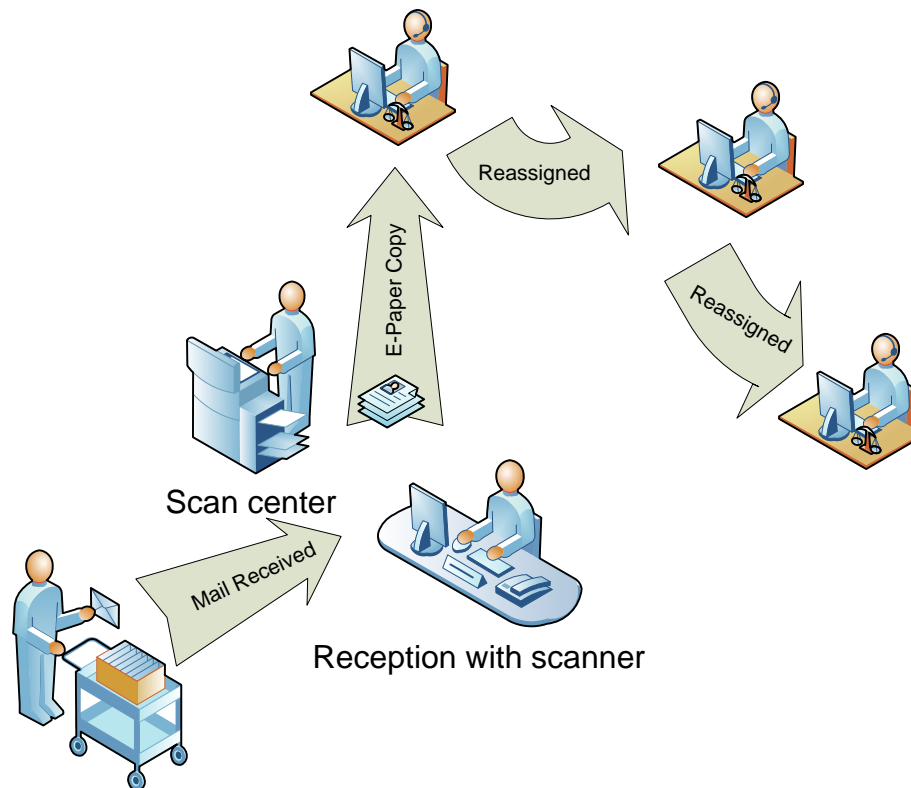
The two main methods of document distribution are:

- **One recipient responsible for the document**
- **Multiple recipients responsible for the document**

One recipient responsible “Hot Potato”

This is the simpler system. Each scanned document is assigned to one staff member who is responsible for taking care of the document and performing any action items stemming from the document. If the recipient is unable to complete the work or is not the correct recipient for the work, they reassign the document to another staff member who then becomes responsible for the document. The audit feature of Time Matters tracks the staff assignments and re-assignments. This method is sometimes likened to the child’s game of “hot potato” since any document can be passed to another staff member who then becomes responsible for it. QuickTabs on the document list are used for this method.

Example of a single recipient workflow



One Recipient - QuickTabs for Document Distribution

Time Matters QuickTabs can be used for single-recipient document distribution. Create a filter using QuickTabs on the main Document list that only shows the incoming documents for a particular staff member. The QuickTabs are usually set to filter either by date or by whether the record is marked “Done.” It is often advisable to set up the tabs on the Program level and use the {STAFF} token in order to speed setup and reduce later administrative overhead.



Review the Time Matters help file for more details about QuickTabs, Advanced Filtering and the {STAFF} token. Many different types of QuickTabs can be created to view the list of incoming scans from different perspectives.

To create QuickTabs for scanned document distribution you must first add Classification Codes that facilitate filtering:

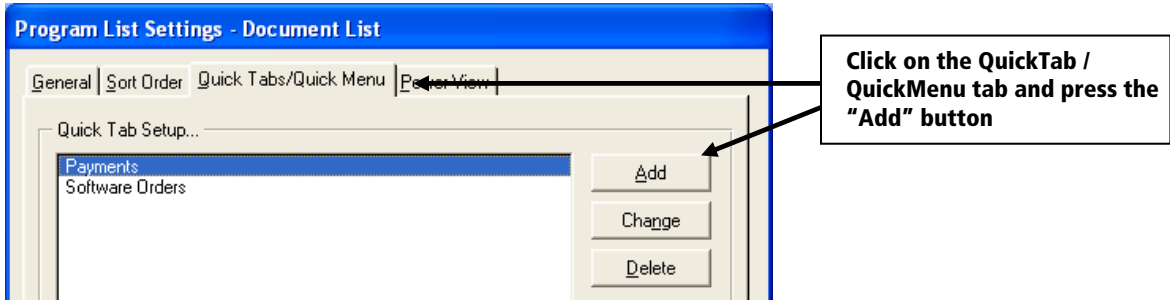
1. Add Classification codes for incoming documents – e.g. “IN” (**FILE ► SETUP ► CODES ► CLASSIFICATION CODES**)
2. Add the incoming code to all incoming documents when scanning *in addition to* the regular classification code for the type of document (e.g. Discovery, Pleading, Correspondence, etc.)
3. Create QuickTabs that filter based on the incoming code” (e.g. “IN”)

To set up Mail/Fax/Delivery QuickTabs:

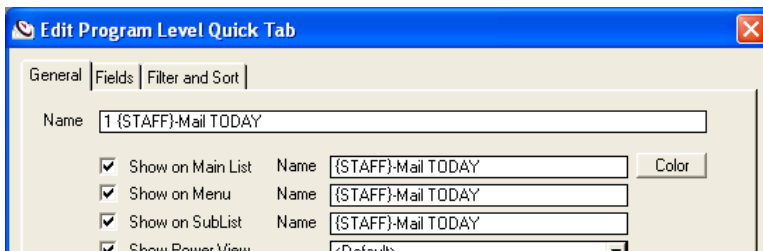
1. **FILE ► SETUP ► GENERAL ► PROGRAM LEVEL**

Click on the Lists tab

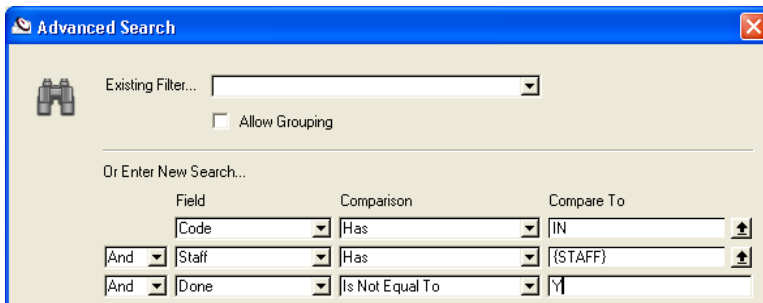
Select Documents as the List Type and press the “Set Lists Options” button



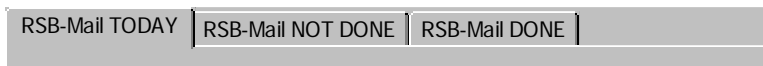
On the General Tab give the new QuickTab a name. Remember you can use the relative {STAFF} token to represent whichever staff member is logged in. Choose appropriate fields from the Fields tab. On the Filter and Sort tab, choose the setting to create an Advanced Filter.



Create a filter that limits the records by staff, code, date and/or completion status.



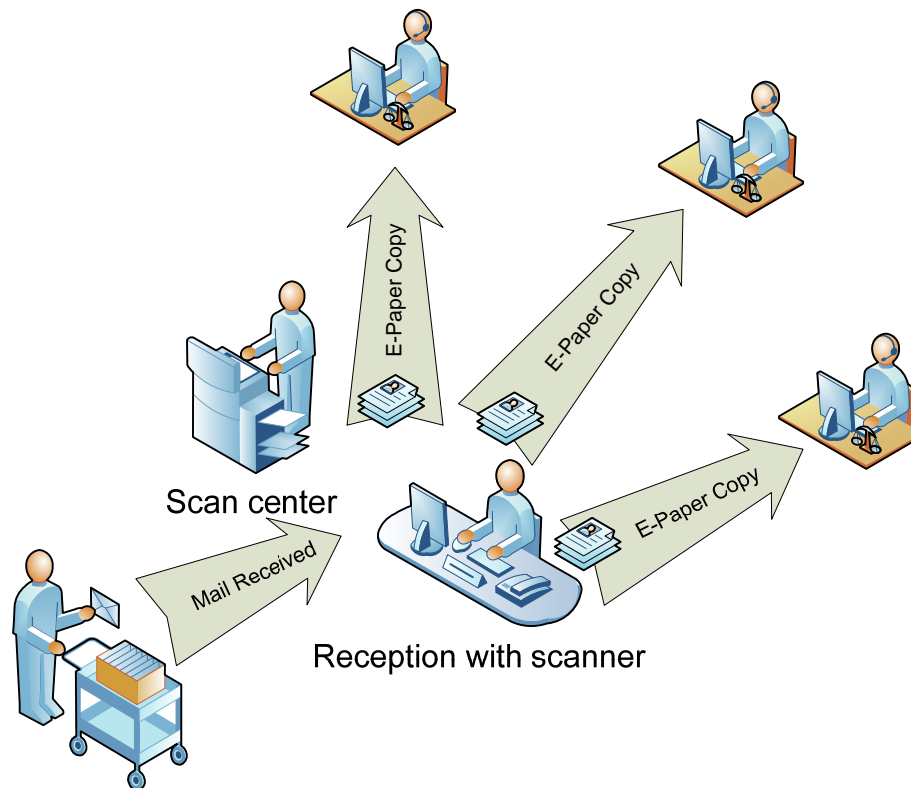
Resulting QuickTabs might look like this:



Multiple recipients responsible “Shotgun”

In this more complicated method, each document record is assigned to one *or more* staff members by way of the Review feature in Time Matters. Each staff member “signs off” as they complete any action for which they might be responsible. When all staff has marked the record as fully reviewed the document review is completed. This spreads the responsibility to multiple staff members like scattershot from a shotgun, but can also cloud the lines of ultimate responsibility.

Example of a multiple recipient workflow



Multiple Recipients - Document Record Review

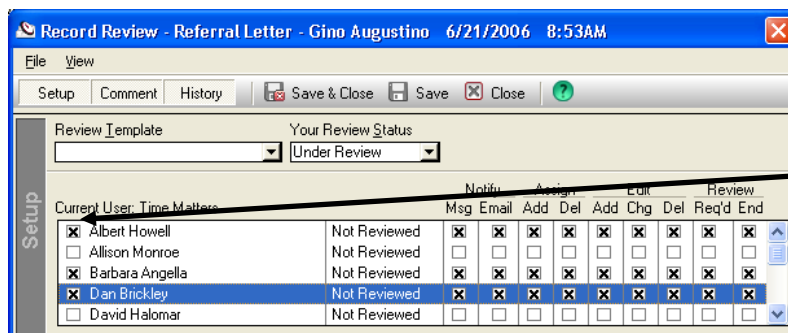
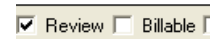
The Time Matters record review feature is used to distribute a document record to multiple recipients. Each recipient must mark the record review as “complete” to sign off that they are finished reviewing that particular document record.



See the **Time Matters Manual** for more details about **Record Review and Record Review Templates**.

To start a record review for a document:

1. Check the “Review” checkbox on the document record
2. Choose the intended recipients as well as their review rights or use a Review Template to speed the entry



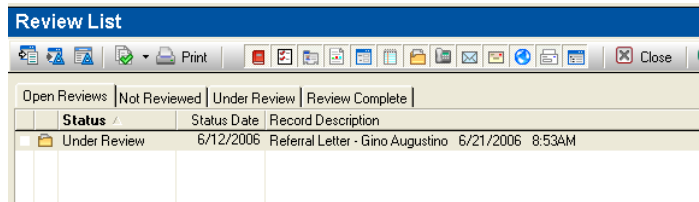
Give review rights to each staff member who needs to see the document

To view open document reviews:

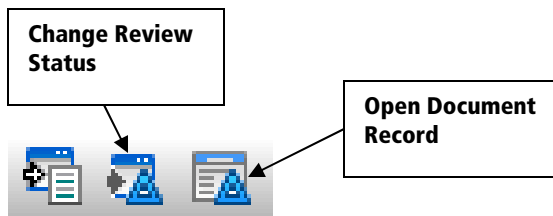
1. Click on **VIEW ► REVIEW LIST** (or Press ALT+SHIFT+R) to open the review list. Alternatively a toolbar icon can be added to open the review list or a section can be added to a Journal



The Review List shows Reviews in various stages. The Open review would be those documents that still need to be reviewed or still have outstanding work that needs to be performed.



From the review list toolbar buttons can be used to open the document record, or change the review status. While the document has been reviewed, the status can be changed to “Under Review” and when completed to “Review Complete”



Once all staff members in the review have marked the review as complete, the checkbox can be removed from the review checkbox ending the review.

Conclusion

Paperless law offices are becoming a reality. Good management dictates that all law offices should begin a review of document procedures to ensure future compatibility with paperless systems. A paperless office is more of a discipline than a technology – offices must evaluate and streamline how they store and retrieve documents so that the increased load of electronic documents in a paperless environment does not cause the firm to be overwhelmed. One of the major components of a paperless office is the paperless distribution of received paper. Time Matters is a good management tool whose existing functions facilitate paperless distribution with both efficiency and accountability. By using Time Matters’ feature, offices with either single or multi recipient distribution topologies, can obtain a paperless office and thus raise their efficiency and lower overhead costs related to paper.