

## PS960 IMAGE MARK READER

As ABBYY's David Evans argues in an excellent article elsewhere in this issue, there is more to effective data capture and recognition than simply accuracy rates or processing speeds. This has long been recognised at Milton Keynes-based capture specialists DRS, who are now approaching 40 years of market leadership in high volume time-critical data capture projects, specialising in ballots and elections all over the world as well as the education market (exam processing and student registration).

Since Document Manager first looked at its PhotoScribe product range a couple of years ago, DRS has refined and enhanced the device significantly, and the PS960 is a unique product in its target market.

With several rounds of censuses planned worldwide between now and 2015, for instance, DRS has become skilled at targeting applications that regular volume scanners simply can't handle. Recent experiments with electronic voting & registration have raised enough concerns for most authorities to remain committed to paper ballots for the foreseeable future, which is where DRS's strength lies.

The sleek but robust PS960 reflects the focus at DRS on 'real world' throughput issues - their R&D team recognise that simply making the machine faster will not necessarily deliver actual throughput efficiencies in the real world. So read-head covers and transports have been redesigned for optimum processing: paper is held more efficiently over the sensors, giving better depth of field and



therefore better image quality. Transport enhancements are claimed to deliver up to a 10% increase in processing speeds: theoretical speeds of 10,000 A5 forms an hour (or 8,500 A4) are now promised which, according to DRS technicians, translates to a typical speed in practice of up to 6,500 sheets per hour.

Double feeds are not only reliably detected every time, but the PS960 will even automatically attempt to re-feed doubles - reducing the operator intervention required. This is a far more user-friendly approach than the 'detect & stop' approach common on most scanners. A new Dynamic Normalisation offering gives much improved image enhancement technology, optimising the 'stretch' of the image (crucial when capturing, for instance, geometric diagrams in exam papers) as well as managing brightness and image compression.

Equally user-friendly is the improved

calibration process at startup. What was previously very much a 'techie' job is now largely automated and driven by an intuitive and simple on-screen interface. Reducing the amount of specialist intervention makes the PS960 much more of an 'out of the box' solution, even in the often harsh environments that make up much of the DRS market.

Part of the reason that DRS is able to produce such a user-friendly and user focused solution is that the company is its own best customer - the largest UK user of the PS960 is the DRS bureau, which has for a long time successfully processed millions of forms a year for exam boards, market research companies and other large data capture users. This has given the developers at DRS a unique insight into the real world requirements of large-scale capture projects; an insight that has translated into a truly world class product in the PS960.

**More info:** [www.drs.co.uk](http://www.drs.co.uk)

## VERDICT

**VERDICT:** Within the specialist high volume, mission-critical data capture markets that DRS has served so long and so well, there is simply no other product in the world that can compete on a level playing field with the PS960. Customers old and new will undoubtedly be beating a path to their door.