See how digital bill of lading workflow can work for you

This white paper describes what the new model for digital bill of lading (BOL) workflow looks like and how it can benefit your shipping operation. You’ll be better prepared to move forward with this enabling technology that can transform your supply chain.

› Imagine going from storing thousands of shipping and receiving documents every month to zero hardcopy storage requirements.
› What if you could slash the printing of bills of lading and other logistics documents by half?
› What if you could find records for audits and inventory disputes in just minutes, instead of days or weeks?
› How could your business use the time and resources you would gain from more efficient workflow?

Where there’s paper, there’s a problem plus an opportunity

Shipping is one of the most paper-intensive areas of logistics. The need to distribute copies of BOLs to multiple recipients contributes to the paper overload every time a shipment goes out. Preprinted BOL forms are the source of the problem. Along with higher printing costs, preprinted forms lack flexibility. For example, you can’t use the BOL data in your business systems until someone rekeys it. Making sure everyone uses current forms takes vigilance, too, or else you’ll scramble to correct mistakes later when someone uses the wrong form. Then there’s programming, maintenance and supplies for aging dot matrix and line printers needed for multipart forms printing.

Off-site document storage and expensive scanning services make it harder to get to shipping records. Paper documents can be misfiled, causing additional processing delays and costs. Customer satisfaction suffers and costs increase when it takes longer to provide records and resolve issues.

For a long time, there has been no other way to deal with bills of lading and the problems associated with using them. Now that’s changed. Now you can make traditional BOL workflow more efficient.

How to improve traditional BOL workflow

Companies are discovering the advantages of a digital BOL solution that handles the requirements for both hardcopy and digital content. You can streamline bottlenecks by eliminating preprinted forms and automating BOL distribution and storage. Digital BOL workflow does both. It eliminates multiple steps to print, copy and fax, and automatically distributes documents in digital format. Benefits include reduced costs, faster shipping processes and improved customer service.
**Advantages of digital workflow**

Paper will probably remain part of BOL workflow for a long time. However, companies today need a more versatile environment capable of handling both paper and digital versions of the same documents. Digital versions give you the ability to automate labor-intensive steps for greater speed and accuracy. It’s an easy solution that can extend your ROI into other areas of your business by making information more available to more users.

Documents can be indexed and stored within your existing enterprise content management (ECM) system for more efficient document retrieval. Digital images of the document are distributed automatically to all who need immediate access to the information.

**Best practices for implementing digital BOL workflow**

As the market seeks more efficiency, the digital BOL model is gaining attention. One successful approach uses smart multifunction products (MFPs) and workflow software. Software tools transform smart MFPs for BOL workflow. The MFPs can be located on the warehouse floor, in the back office or wherever they’re needed.

The straightforward deployment typically doesn’t impact your current systems. The MFP replaces separate printer, copier and fax devices with one integrated system—resulting in lower support costs and more efficient workspace.

**Prepare BOLs for multiple users from a single interface and system:**

- Print a second paper copy for the driver
- Email to a customer to confirm shipment
- Fax to U.S. Customs
- Scan a PDF or TIFF image to a document server for an ECM system

This approach reduces cost and provides faster access to shipping documents, while improving customer service.

Customers, carriage firms, internal departments and even U.S. Customs can receive BOL information immediately, rather than waiting on paper copies.

**Launching digital BOL workflow**

An experienced team designs, customizes, tests and integrates the solution into your environment, your workflow and your special requirements.

**Using digital BOL workflow**

The signed BOL form is simply loaded into the MFP scanner, which brings it into your digital workflow.

**Sharing digital BOL workflow**

The BOL is automatically delivered to appropriate destinations in the appropriate format, such as fax or email, and users can search by customer name, order number, shipment and other criteria.

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*Intelligent MFPs are an essential part of a digital BOL process.*

*With a better way to manage inbound and outbound documents, you gain powerful benefits from the very first day.*
How digital BOL workflow benefits your business

Cost savings:
- Eliminates the expense of expensive preprinted, multipart forms
- No more wasted obsolete preprinted forms
- Eliminates or reduces need for warehouse space or offsite storage

Improved shipping workflow:
- Eliminates manual steps of separating, mailing and filing copies
- Employees and partners get information faster
- Enables more secure document control and retention

Faster information access:
- No more manual handling and searching for misplaced records
- Multiple users can access stored digital BOLS at the same time
- Improves customer service, audit and compliance

Best partners for best practices: the Lexmark Digital BOL solution

Lexmark takes an innovative approach that has successfully helped retailers, manufacturers, shipping firms and others transform their logistics operations. We understand the unique challenges of the shipping and logistics industry, and we can use our experience to propel greater efficiency in your environment.

The Lexmark Digital BOL solution is a complete workflow automation package that easily drops into your existing shipping document processes. Our solution accelerates logistics workflow and provides easier access to your shipping records.

Greater efficiency with every shipment

Lexmark smart MFPs and software tools work together to reduce manual paper-centric BOL processes and improve access to information.

Instead of costly preprinted forms, the Lexmark Digital BOL solution provides a single-page, laser-printed form that’s ready for signing. You eliminate the manual steps of separating, mailing, faxing and filing multi-page forms.

Replace preprinted BOL forms with digital productivity

Every BOL can go from your shipping dock to your business office in just minutes instead of days.

Electronic BOL information flows smoothly as part of a digital enterprise workflow, providing consistent accuracy with more convenience by eliminating manual data entry and distribution.

Want to know more?

Lexmark’s business process experts can talk to you about how our digital BOL workflow solution is helping companies achieve greater operational efficiency and business growth. Contact us today with your questions and we’ll start working on the answers.

Strategically placed MFPs bring productivity anywhere in your process.