

# Advanced Imaging Features Affordable for Mid-sized Linen Service Companies

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Imaging system features previously affordable only by the largest national service companies are now in use by local and regional companies. Designed to be widely scalable, Safekeep® is efficient at handling a few hundred or a hundred thousand invoices per day. Smart features include missing document reports, invoice search by customer name or date, and automatic copies of signed invoices for billing statements.

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**N**EW England Linen Supply, Inc. (Pawtucket, RI) is a mid-sized, family owned company servicing Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts. Their Safekeep® imaging system, from Acordex Imaging Systems (W. Boxford, Ma) is integrated with the Laundry Logic (Plymouth Meeting, Pa) Route Accounting software to provide advanced document management features. The integrated system includes a long term archive of invoice images and data.

"Our Route Accounting system has a lot of knowledge about each invoice," explains Ed Keegan, President of Laundry Logic. "The key to the smart imaging features is making that knowledge available to Safekeep. That enables intelligent document management, automating things like a missing document reports and automatically printing copies of signed invoices for each customer bill. It's a great benefit to our customers."

## COPIES OF SIGNED INVOICES

"Perhaps the most dreaded task in managing the paper in a linen service company is getting copies

of signed invoices out with the bills," stated Kenneth Rohr, President of Acordex. "Without Safekeep, incoming invoices create a daunting sequence of tasks: collating, sorting, filing and retrieval, sometimes photo-copying. Thousands of pages are sorted into customer folders so they can be pulled later and enclosed with the customer's bill. Not every customer demands 'proofs of delivery' with their bill, but enough do that this is a major pain that our software has eliminated for the industry."

The relief provided by imaging technology is confirmed by customers. "I love this system," enthused Ellen Alden, Administrative Assistant and Safekeep operator for New England Linen. "This imaging system has made my life easier. It's that simple."

At the end of the month, the Safekeep operator simply clicks the 'Print' button. Safekeep goes through the list of New England Linen's customers that need copies of signed invoices with their billing statements. A copy of every invoice for each customer in the list is automatically printed.

Safekeep is smart enough to know that some invoices have a stub on one side that contains internal billing information (pre-bills) and other invoices do not (specials or hot-shots). Safekeep only prints the portion of the signed invoice that is intended for the customer, trimming off the internal stub.

## THE MANAGEMENT VIEW

Gary Richardson, an owner of New England Linen, listed eight specific advantages that his organization derives from their Safekeep imaging system:

1. Filing time. "We measured a time savings of four hours per day because we no longer sort and file the invoices returned by the drivers. We were doing 350-400 invoices a day when I measured this time savings." This adds up to 1,000 hours per year. If you use \$16/hr as a labor rate, eliminating *just this one task* provides a \$16,000 per year payback from imaging.
2. Copies of signed invoices. "Pulling copies of invoices to enclose with billing statements is completely eliminated. This task used to consume two days of my Admin Assistant's time at the end of every month." This adds up to 192 hours per year, or \$3,100 per year payback.
3. Recovering older invoices. "No trips to the file storage. Walking down to the old document storage area always occurs when you're in the middle of trying to solve a customer problem. Every time you needed a document, it wasted fifteen minutes." Returning a document and filing it in the right box takes another fifteen minutes. Or worse, the documents sit in the office where they eventually get lost. Just one round trip to the old document storage area per day (retrieve and then re-file) adds up to \$2,000 per year of wasted labor.
4. Terminal screen printing. "Printing a Laundry Logic screen using the Acordex terminal emulator is easier than doing the same function through the Wyse terminal."
5. Missing Document Report. "We now identify missing documents early, within a couple of days, so that they may be recovered. Our prior manual system had no indication of missing or misfiled invoices unless called for. Then you'd be lost. If it was six months old, you wouldn't know where to turn."
6. Eliminates storage space. "We stored about one million pages to meet the IRS requirement of seven years." Banker's boxes stacked three-high will hold about 10,000 pages per 5 square feet. New England Linen's space savings for 1,000,000 pages is 500 sq. ft. If you use \$9/ft for office space (office space in large cities is much higher), this item provides \$4,500 per year payback.
7. Office file purge. "Safekeep eliminates the periodic purge of office files to the long-term storage area. This is not an enormous amount of time, but we have a busy office. Keeping up with the daily routine and then trying to fit something else on top is a real pain."
8. Frees up office space. "Five 4-drawer filing cabinets were removed from our office after we installed Safekeep. They were filled with paper that is now getting scanned. These cabinets are in addition to the long-term storage area. Just one filing cabinet is left, to hold our other paper." The appearance of the office to visiting customers is dramatically better. Customers see an imaging system instead of a row of filing cabinets.

All of the items above contribute real cost savings to the linen service company. The savings calculations above are done for just the items where hard dollars are obvious. The other items will also contribute substantial savings. These numbers are based on 350-400 invoices per day. In all cases, the dollar amount will go up proportional to the number of invoices handled.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE BENEFITS

Some of New England Linen's customers have requested copies of signed invoices up to seven years old. These customers like their vendors to be retain old invoices to help them substantiate their expenses in the event of an audit. Safekeep enables New England Linen to effortlessly fulfill this request.

When customers call with questions, Safekeep lets you refer to original documents while the customer is still on the phone. This avoids a call-back, which makes the customer happier and means less work for your staff. With an image of the original paper at hand, you can make sure you are billing the customer for exactly the items authorized on the signed invoice.

There are cost savings of making both of these Customer Service tasks more efficient. But even more important, happy customers are repeat customers and make great reference accounts.

## ACCOUNTING BENEFITS

Safekeep is a powerful tool in supporting Accounts Receivable collection efforts. An all too common response to a collection call is "send me a copy of the signed invoice." With Safekeep, you can fax a copy immediately. Then you're on to the next call instead of searching for paper.

If the customer disputes a bill, you have instant access to the image of the original. You can confirm or correct the data in your Route Accounting database. Either way, you settle the dispute based on fact. You avoid concessions based on not having the time to go searching for invoices

that may or may not be filed in the correct location.

The missing document reports are also important to Accounting. For COD cash accounts, it is especially important to know that all signed invoices are returned. This is your only written record to balance the cash against. Knowing that the paper record is complete gives you confidence that your cash balance is correct.

## CONCLUSION

"Acordex has done a really great job of integrating imaging into our environment," stated Gary Richardson (NE Linen owner). "Before we bought the Safekeep system, people warned us that imaging vendors really don't offer what linen service companies need, that it wouldn't really fit. But Acordex listens to our needs, their product is great and the responsive support Acordex provides is second to none."

With Safekeep, New England Linen Supply provides better customer service, has more accurate accounting data and has reduced costs in eight specific areas. Many of the savings rely on advanced features of their Safekeep system. These "smart features" were previously available only in imaging systems costing well into six digits. Acordex has made them available starting in the low 5-digit range, a price point that makes economic sense to local and regional linen service companies. -

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For more information, contact Kenneth Rohr at Acordex Imaging Systems (978 352-5500), a product development and system integration company specializing in high performance document management systems.  
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