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**June Smith**  
Administrative Assistant  
Commonwealth Medical Labs  
Warrenton, VA

### Allergy testing lab finds cure for paper disorder

For over 20 years, Commonwealth Medical Laboratories, specializing in allergy testing, has served private practices and other clinical reference labs across the country. One of the top labs in the nation, it conducts customized allergy profiles and panels for all kinds of allergens including pollen, pet dander, foods, molds, medications, etc. Clinics send blood samples to Commonwealth where the blood is tested for reactions to allergens. Commonwealth also does environmental testing, which includes indoor air sample analysis and Do-It-Yourself kits that people can use to take samples of their home environments and then send the samples to Commonwealth for analysis.

Over the years, Commonwealth's lab has grown in size and so has the paper it generates. By law, the company is required to keep all of its records, including lab test results, for seven years.

### Finding test results was time consuming

June Smith, one of the lab's three administrative assistants, is in charge of on-site administration of Document Locator. She says, about the former paper-based system:

“It was time-consuming to retrieve paper from six years ago, and sometimes that's exactly what we needed to do. That was our biggest dilemma, finding results that a doctor might request for a returning patient that they haven't seen in five years. We had to go back and dig through the records, and that took time.”

It also took about 30 hours every week just to deal with filing all of the paper generated by the lab.

When company owner Michael Pratt gave the go-ahead to find a scanning system, June and her co-workers researched various solutions.

**Customer:** Commonwealth Medical Labs  
**Industry:** Life Sciences

### Critical Issue

Paper-based system made it difficult to find lab test results quickly, and required 30 hours per week of filing time.

### Solution

Enterprise document management system with integrated scanning and full text searching saves time and makes it easy to retrieve files.

### Software and Services

Document Locator  
ScanStation Module

They needed one that incorporated scanning with OCR capability, data storage, and the ability to read bar codes, all for a reasonable price. Everything they looked at fell short of their needs, except Document Locator.

“We were looking for a multi-functional product that could do everything we needed, and we found it in Document Locator,” says Smith.

In addition to Document Locator, ColumbiaSoft also recommended a document capture scanner suited to the lab’s needs. The scanner is connected directly to the Document Locator repository.

Smith says the solution has worked out “very well.” And she should know. She is the person responsible for making sure that everything in the lab that needs to be converted to electronic data gets scanned. For example, insurance forms, CLIA (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services Certificate of Compliance) licenses that have to be sent to different states, insurance EOBs (Explanation of Benefits), and contracts that they have with different medical facilities.

## Improved customer service with faster test results

The move from paper to digital has made Commonwealth more efficient and enabled them to get test results to doctors faster when doctors call in, which the doctors like very much.

“What used to be a lengthy search for a document now takes a minute. Doctors’ requests for test results can be met immediately, now that we’ve installed Document Locator,” says Smith, because results are looked up in the electronic database.

Using Document Locator, the digital files are organized so that all the staff needs to do is click on the desired document. They can easily bring up the test results and related insurance information. And since the information is in a secure repository, there aren’t worries about unauthorized access.

Another benefit is better quality faxes to clients. Before when sending faxes, the faxed information didn’t always print clearly on the client end and faxes would have to be resent. Now, says

Smith, she just downloads the file from Document Locator and either sends it as an encrypted attachment in an email or does a print-to-fax, if that’s what the client requires. “The legibility of the fax is unbelievable,” she says.

## From paper-more to paper-less

Although they haven’t eliminated paper completely from the process, they no longer have to keep it stored in the office for reference purposes. The 10 x 12-foot room that used to house files can be put to another use because paper files are now archived on another floor.

And the need to spend 30 hours or so a week doing nothing but filing? Gone. The daily five to six hours of filing has become less than an hour per day of scanning.

Document Locator’s scanning system not only met the lab’s challenges, it exceeded them “far beyond my expectations,” says Smith.

And ColumbiaSoft’s technical support has been “phenomenal.” She says a lot of technical support departments have a multiple-day call back period, but ColumbiaSoft’s is 24 hours. “And it’s usually within close of business.”

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