# The Paperwork Solution

*By Amy Petré Hill*

Paperwork. It gluts company in-
boxes, fills filing cabinets, and
covers desks. It gets stacked into
expensive corporate warehouses,
and is carefully tended by
specialized file managers and their
assistants. After the papers have
served their purpose, they still have
to be shredded, recycled, thrown
away, or burned.

Software industry leaders predicted
that with the growth of the Internet and corporate Intranets, the
amount of paperwork companies generated would vastly decrease.
In some industries, the glut of paperwork has been reduced, but for
many of the major industries that use programs written in BBx® -
manufacturing, distribution, accounting, and health care - the
amount of paperwork that must be processed and then archived
remains overwhelming.

Christian Schulze, president of Marathon Computer, and a BBx
programmer for more than eleven years, saw that many BBx end-
users in his home country of Germany were drowning in paperwork
and looking to their BBx value-added reseller (VAR) and
independent software vendor (ISVs) for practical solutions. After two
years of research and development, Schulze and his team at
Marathon Computer have developed SCAN-Office, an electronic
archive system created specifically for BBx application developers.

"Here at Marathon, we have been offering German
BBx programmers and end-users all different kinds
of software and hardware solutions for years," says
Schulze. "In the 1980's Marathon was a system
house for hardware from Rexon, Pertec, and
Motorola. In cooperation with several software houses who worked
with Business Basic, we sold complete solutions throughout
Germany. In 1985 we came into contact with BASIS and convinced
several software partners to switch from their Business Basic to
BBx."

"In 1993 we saw that effectively handling paperwork was a
challenge both end-users and developers were struggling with,"
Schulze continues. "There were some archiving systems already out
on the market, but they did not address the special needs or
programming styles of BBx users. We saw this hole in the market
and we decided to fill it with SCAN-Office, our own archiving system
written in BBx. We went to the market with SCAN-Office in July
1995."

SCAN-Office is a complete system that works for data archiving
(COLD) and for document storage on hard disk, MO, or WORM disks
through juke boxes. Because the program is written in BBx, it can

be launched by simply using the CALL command.

According to Schulze, "SCAN-Office covers everything we found end-users needing in an archive system. The product has sophisticated scan capabilities that allows you to automatically or manually scan, manipulate, and save documents to a variety of formats, such as `.bmp` or `.tif` files. The program can also send the document out to other terminals, printers, and faxes."

In Germany, this BBx-based product has proved very successful. To date, Marathon has about 20 companies running their product, including SAT 1, a large German TV station that uses Scan-Office as a press document information system. Several steel companies, like Interpipe Stinnes Rohunion, are also effectively utilizing SCAN-Office. "In Germany, industries like steel have very strict paperwork requirements," says Schulze. "Every piece of steel created in this country must have a certificate that verifies its quality. That means steel mills here have to handle literally hundreds of thousands of documents each year. By using SCAN-Office, and scanning all of these documents, the company makes this information instantly available to everyone in the company. Now when they need a steel certificate, they use the BBx program written by their VAR, which in turn activates SCAN-Office and delivers the document to them immediately." They no longer have to spend time and money maintaining a paper warehouse.

Banks are also starting to use the SCAN-Office program to verify checks. "We have a bank customer that is using our program to verify their checks," mentions Schulze. "They have over 200 terminals that employees can use to compare handwritten signatures with archive signatures stored on a big juke box."

Marathon is continuing the development of the product and will add several powerful features to its upcoming release of SCAN-Office, such as: Graphic (UNIX) surface handling via the mouse, buttons with locally stored or downloaded icons and hidden features, keyboards configurable from either local or host locations, Network File System (NFS) and File Transfer Protocol (FTP), and cut and paste functions. Schulze also plans to expand the portability of the product to cover the Windows NT and OS/2 operating systems and make it linkable with external database systems.

Until this year, Marathon has sold primarily to customers in Germany and Eastern Europe, but is looking to expand into the North and South American markets. "We know that companies in Europe and America share the same paper archiving problems," says Schulze. "Marathon is offering a special BBx electronic archive system that VARs and ISVs around the world can give their customers."

**For more information contact:**

    **MARATHON COMPUTER GmBH**
    **Phillip-Reis Straße 5**
    **GERMANY**
    **Phone: 06074-2278**
    **Fax: 06074-31586**