How to Use Your Smartphone as a Scanner on the Road

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If you have a smartphone with a camera, you essentially have a mobile document scanner— one you can use to scan and submit invoices and other paperwork to companies you work with, including Advance Business Capital (ABC), the preferred freight factoring provider of DAT.

Whether you use a document scanning app on an Android, iPhone, or a Windows Mobile device, the process is nearly identical. Scanning apps work by using your phone's camera to take a picture of your paperwork and the software converts the photo into a black-and-white document, enhancing it to make it as readable as possible. So if you want to expedite your factoring process, scan and send the invoice to your freight bill factoring company as soon as you can while you're out on the road.

There are important differences between taking a picture and making a scan we can use to process payment quickly. Follow these tips to make the most of the technology at hand:

Choosing an app

We don't have a preference for the app you use as long as it converts the image into a black-and-white document and not a photograph. All things being equal, your choice should probably come down to support. The developers who built the program want you to use it correctly and effectively. Are the settings and instructions clear? Is the web site helpful? Are there videos available?

ABC is part of that support network, too. Virtually any new smartphone can produce a great picture and run an app that will convert it into a scanned document. The key to good image quality— and speedy payment processing—rests with you. If you have questions about submitting electronic documents, let us know.

Composing images

Start with a good original. Is it legible and complete? Problems with a paper copy will transfer to the electronic document.

For best results, place the document on a flat, well-lit surface. Turn off the camera's flash and shoot straight down. The app should allow you to straighten and crop the image so nothing but the document is in the frame—no table edges or dashboards.

Practice using the app's settings to produce a crisp, clear, black-and-white document. Zoom in and judge the results yourself: if you're having trouble reading the document, just delete the file and try again. It's always faster to take another image than to submit a poor scan to us and have us ask you to retake it anyway.

File types

Most apps let you save your document in different file types. We prefer TIFFs and PDFs: TIFFs can be converted to other file formats without losing quality, while PDFs tend to be smaller files and make it easier to organize multi-page documents. Avoid using JPG, PNG, and other file types used for photos.

Multipage documents

Compile all the paperwork for a load into one file. Some apps make a separate file for each page you scan, but it's easier when all the documents associated with a load—rate confirmations, bills of lading, and so on—are grouped together.

Sending documents

Most of our clients send paperwork electronically, which you can do straight from your phone. If you use TMS software, see if it supports FTP or some other type of electronic file transfer to automatically submit invoice information (freight bills) and shipment status updates.

Keep the original

An electronic copy is just that—a copy. Keep the original paperwork and file it away in case you need it later. There are cases where we do request originals for loads where originals are required by the broker.

Image by Simon Yeo via Flickr

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