A/P Invoice Processing Module

The developers of the IMIGIT[tm] document imaging software have just announced a brand new module for processing A/P invoices. The goal of this new module is to significantly reduce the time and expense of getting A/P invoice data entered into the A/P accounting software.

The new A/P Invoice Processing module has four basic steps. In the first step, the A/P invoices are scanned. In the second step, a template is assigned to each scanned image. Each template is unique to a particular vendor and tells the imaging software where the various data fields are located. In the third step, the software reads the data in those selected fields and presents the data for validation. In the final step, the extracted data is passed to the A/P accounting software where it can be imported without any additional data entry requirements.

While there will always be some invoices that are more difficult to read than others, the A/P Invoice Processing module should correctly read and extract 70% to 80% of the invoice data. This represents a significant reduction in the time required to process A/P invoices. Once the A/P invoice data has been extracted and verified, that data can be loaded directly into the A/P accounting software.

This process is explained in more detail in the following pages.

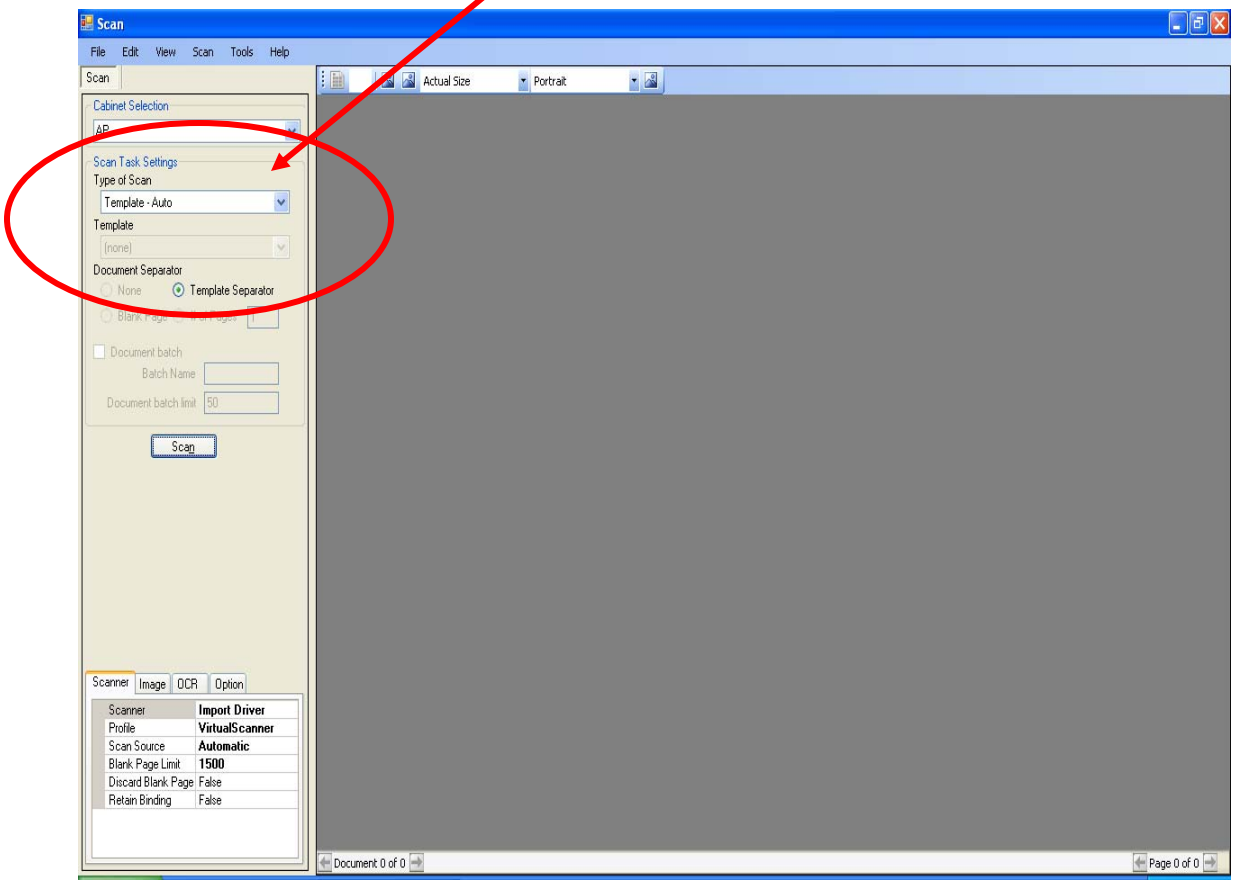
Step 1: Scan the A/P Invoices

The first step is to scan in the A/P invoices to be processed. In most situations, the A/P invoices will be first separated by vendor and all of the invoices for a particular vendor will be scanned as one batch. However, sorting the invoices into groups by vendor is NOT necessary with this module. All invoices can be placed in the scanner and scanned through in one pass without any sorting or organizing.

As part of the set up for this module, a template is created for each vendor's invoice format. The invoice tells the software how to recognize each invoice type and where on the invoice the various data fields occur. As the invoices are then scanned, the software compares each invoice against the set of templates and attempts to identify the correct template for each invoice.

On the first screen in this example, the "Auto" option has been selected. This tells the software that there will be a variety of different invoices being scanned and that the software will need to identify each invoice as it is scanned.

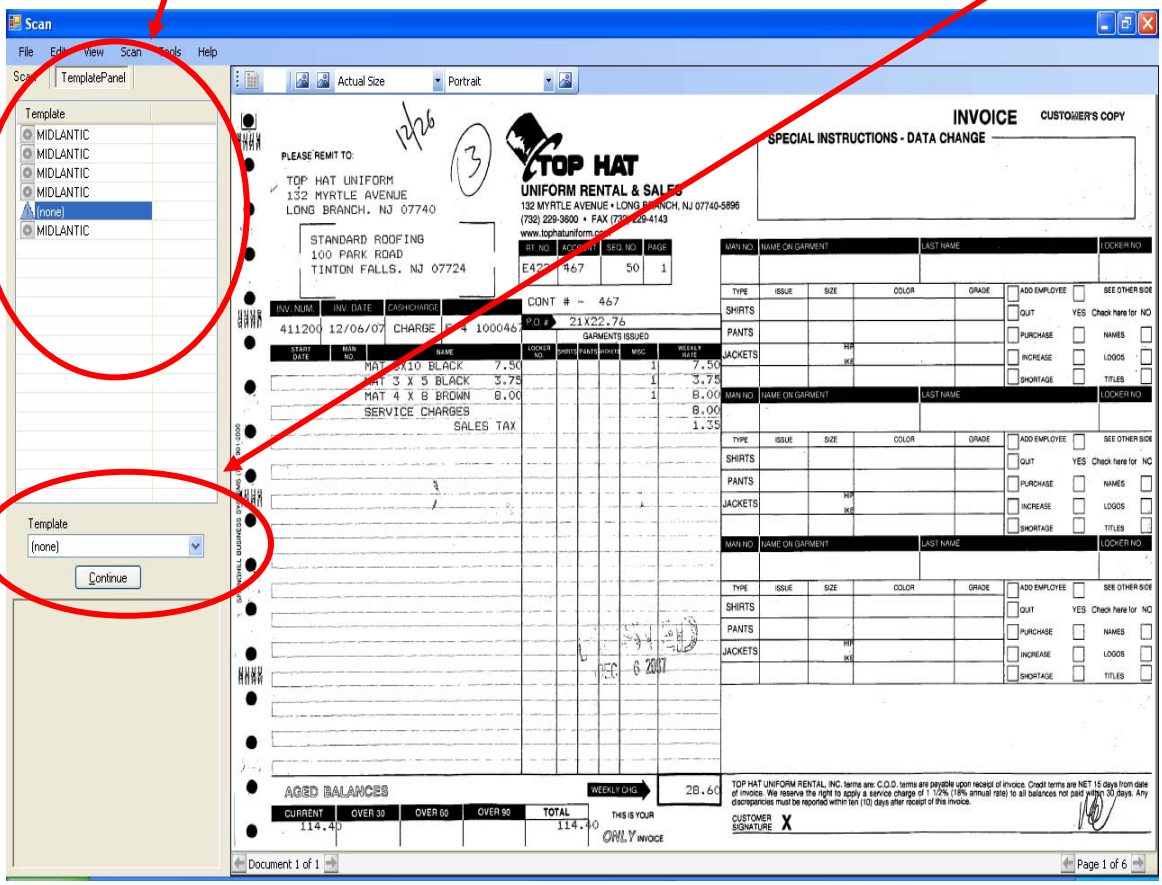
If the invoices have already been sorted by vendor and invoices for only one vendor are being scanned in this batch, the user would select the template for that vendor rather than the "Auto" template.



Step 2: Verify the Templates

After the batch of invoices has been scanned, the invoices will be displayed in the main window. In a small window on the left is a list showing the template that was assigned to each scanned invoice. If the software is able to identify the invoice with a high degree of confidence, a template is assigned. If there is a question about which template to use, the software flags the image and waits for the user to look at the image of the invoice and select the correct template.

In this example, the software has been able to identify all but one invoice. The invoice for Top Hat was not recognized. This may be because there was no template created for Top Hat or it may be due to a poor quality image. In either case, the software flags the image so that the user can review it. If a template exists, the user can select the appropriate template for this invoice from the drop down list.



It is also possible to set up a "generic" template that can be used for vendors who are used only infrequently. While no data will be automatically extracted with the generic template, it is one way to get the invoices scanned and ready for the next step.

Step 3: Confirm the Data

Once the templates have been verified, the next step is for the software to read the data fields and extract the information that has been requested for a given template. This is the real key to the A/P Invoice Processing module.

In this example, there are three windows displayed. The top half of the screen shows the image of the invoice, with various areas highlighted in yellow. These highlighted areas show which fields the software is extracting data from. The value that was extracted is shown in red just above each highlighted area.

In the bottom half of the screen, a copy of the PO that is associated with this invoice is displayed. This assumes that there is a copy of the PO in the imaging system and that the PO Number is printed somewhere on the A/P invoice. When the software reviews the invoice and finds a PO Number, it will send a query to the imaging system, retrieve a copy of the original PO, and display it in the lower part of the window. This allows the user to quickly compare what was ordered on the PO with what the vendor billed on the invoice.

In the left window is a list of the various fields that were extracted by the template. As the user moves through the fields, the highlighted area for each field on the invoice will be displayed. The user can review the data that was extracted and compare it with the actual data on the invoice. If there are discrepancies, the correct data can be entered immediately.

Once all of the data has been reviewed and confirmed, the user clicks on the SAVE button in the lower left corner of the screen. This adds the extracted data to a file that will eventually contain all of the data for all invoices in this batch. That file can then be imported into the A/P accounting software without any other data entry work.

In the top main window, the invoice image and some of the highlighted areas where data has been read from is displayed.

In the lower main window, a copy of the PO for this invoice is displayed. The PO is retrieved from the imaging system automatically by using the PO data field that is printed on the invoice. This allows the user to compare the PO and the invoice.

In the left window, the various data fields that were extracted by this template are displayed. As the user moves through this list, the highlight will move to the next field. If the extracted data is correct, the user can simply move on to the next field. If the data is incorrect, the user can quickly and easily enter the correct data right from the invoice.

When everything is correct, the user clicks on the SAVE button to add this data to the batch file that will be passed on to the A/P accounting software.