

# Document Imaging Report

Business Trends on Converting Paper Processes to Electronic Format

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## Westbrook Introduces Web-Based Mid-Market App

**Westbrook Technologies** is returning to its roots with the recent release of its *Fortis Blue* Web-based document imaging and management application. While the product is a completely new offering, its target market, the SMB, represents an old-school direction for the Branford, Connecticut-based ISV. Aimed at installations of between two and 25 seats, *Fortis Blue* fills a hole that was created when Westbrook discontinued its *FileMagic* product in 2006.

Founded in 1990, Westbrook has enjoyed success in the mid-market through its channel of value-added resellers. This includes a strong relationship with digital copier mega-dealer **IKON**, which has been reselling Westbrook's flagship *Fortis* product since 2002. *Fortis* is a client/server application that scales from the SMB to the enterprise; Westbrook has several large implementations in markets like financial services, utilities, healthcare, and the public sector.

In 2003, Westbrook brought in a new CTO and began development on a .NET platform that evolved into a services-oriented architecture (SOA) initiative. The idea was to enable easy integration with enterprise platforms like ERP and CRM systems, which Westbrook hoped to leverage to gain partnerships with high-end software vendors [see *DIR* 6/17/05, 12/2/05, & 6/2/06]. Unfortunately, the launch of the SOA product was pushed back several times before the initiative was finally shelved in 2008.

The technology behind the initiative, however, has re-emerged as *Fortis Blue*. "We had some challenges with the with the SOA project," admitted George Hresko, business analyst for Westbrook. "The

development process and the technology kind of ran away from us. So, about a year-and-a-half ago, we checked development. We leveraged some of what we did to create *Fortis Blue*."

*Fortis Blue* features a zero-footprint client (leveraging **AtalaSoft's** AJAX-based document imaging SDK). "*Fortis Blue* has the richness and look and feel of a desktop application," said Hresko. "We have focused on creating a rich-internet application, meaning we have leveraged technologies in areas like AJAX and SOAP to give *Fortis Blue* the computing power of a traditional client/server set-up. For example, you don't get the flickering and other annoyances inherent in traditional Web applications for document management."

It's worth noting that both the administration and the user client are completely Web-based. "This means administrators can do things like set up workflows and security policies from virtually any computer," said Hresko.

Westbrook Director of R&D Keth Astron noted that the security features in *Fortis Blue* are especially strong. "They are substantially beefed up compared to what we offer in our traditional *Fortis* product," he said. "We've designed the security to be configured specifically to meet regulations like HIPAA and Sarbanes-Oxley. Users can do things like set security for documents based on specific queries and folders."

The user client supports more than 300 file types and has features like "point-and-click" OCR (to expedite indexing), support for advanced queries, and mark-up and annotation capabilities. It offers access to multi-media files. "We've also created a new workflow interface which you don't have to be an administrator to use," said Hresko.

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*Fortis Blue* currently features a traditional client scanning module that works with both ISIS and TWAIN driven hardware. “The good news is that

90% of the scanning functionality is embedded on the server,” said Astron. “Our future goal is to make the capture capabilities even more distributed.”

Pricing for *Fortis Blue* has been set at about \$1,000 per concurrent seat. “We want to break into the SMB space very aggressively,” said Einar Haukeland, president and CEO of Westbrook. “We will start out using the same resellers and partners we have established relationships with. Most of them have been asking for something in this price range. A lot of our partners sell hardware, and they are looking for software they can bundle into their MFP leases. *Fortis Blue* might fit their pricing models better than our traditional software.”

Haukeland does not see *Fortis Blue* as competition for *Fortis*. “That’s not to say we won’t add enterprise features to *Fortis Blue* in the future,” he said. “Right now, however, we are focused on delivering a product that people in the SMB market are looking for.”

When we asked if there might be some overlap with Microsoft *SharePoint*, which can potentially be used for mid-market content management, Astron told us *Fortis Blue* is designed to complement *SharePoint*. “We are working on bi-directional two-way integration through Web Parts,” he said.

### ***Filling a market niche***

Haukeland said the naming convention of the new product reflects its potential deployment in a cloud computing environment. “We believe *Fortis* is a strong brand, so we wanted to use it in some part of the name,” he said. “We also wanted to reflect that this is a new product on a different level—designed with our industry’s future in mind. Because *Fortis Blue* is Web-based, it’s not too far away from being deployed in the sky [where ‘the cloud’ resides].”

As I’ve mentioned in *DIR*, I agree with Haukeland’s vision that the cloud is going to have a major impact on our industry in the near future. And I’m glad to hear that Westbrook has managed to salvage something tangible out of multiple years of .NET and SOA-focused development. I always thought that, because of its history of success in the SMB space, Westbrook’s enterprise-focus for its SOA product line was extremely resource intensive for a relatively small ISV. I didn’t understand how Westbrook could justify supporting two separate product sales and development teams.

*Fortis Blue* is a better fit, because it can potentially leverage the channels Westbrook has already built. A completely Web-based document management system targeted at and priced for the SMB, which includes some advanced features that Westbrook has carried downstream, is also fairly innovative. The tricky part will be getting the channel to embrace something this cutting edge.

That said, *SharePoint* is also predominantly Web-based and may be laying some ground work for adoption of more Web-based document management applications. However, it’s also worth nothing that one of Westbrook’s leading partners, IKON, recently signed on to resell software from *KnowledgeLake*, the leading ISV for image-enabling *SharePoint* environments [see *previous story*]. So, there will definitely be some competition—even in Westbrook’s own channel.

One thing *Fortis Blue* does have going for it is the zero-footprint interface, which, based on feedback I’ve received from other vendors that offer similar technology, seems to hit a sweet spot with a lot of end users who are trying to keep their desktops light. I’m looking forward to seeing some early case studies detailing the success of *Fortis Blue*.

For more info: <http://www.westbrooktech.com/>