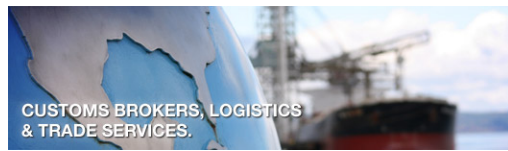
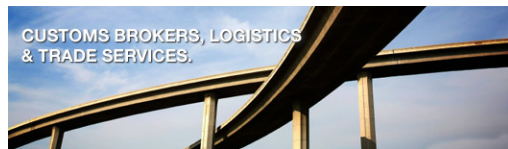




# SimpleCapture Speeds Goods Across the Border



## PROJECT SUMMARY

**Company:** LiNK+ Corporation, London ON Canada

**Industry:** Customs Brokers, Logistics & Trade Services

**Application:** Click Entry Capture Project

**Challenge:** Large volume of multiple page invoices must be accurately processed by hand on each day received project.

**Solution:** Artsyl Technologies SimpleCapture Pro, Connectis PSG Services for consulting and template design.

**Results:** LiNK + was able to semi-automate their inbound document processing with minimal set-up, reducing data entry from 2 minutes / page to 6 seconds and virtually eliminated errors.

Every day, Link + Corporation, a leading Canadian Customs clearing agent, faces the ultimate invoice processing challenge.

Most companies merely process invoices from their own vendors. But Link + must also process the huge volume of invoices its clients receive – many with their own unique format. The company’s clients are often manufacturers who rely on the smooth flow of supplies to keep their factories running at peak efficiency. Link + shepherds these critical imports through the complex and arcane customs process.

Client invoices contain data about the goods being imported and Link + must quickly and accurately extract data from each of them to feed their customs clearing processes. Link + chose SimpleCapture document capture software from Artsyl Technologies for this mission-critical job. SimpleCapture reduced the time and cost required to process thousands of client invoices per month. “The software has done everything we were told it would do,” says Link + Vice President of Finance John

Paczkowski.

### The Challenge

The extracted data help Link + experts determine which regulations and fees should be applied to the import of goods into Canada. These rules and regulations are extremely complex and vary with the type of goods being imported. Failure to comply with regulations or pay correct fees can delay or prevent importation of the goods and Canadian authorities may fine the importer. SimpleCapture helps ensure that Link + clients avoid these consequences.

Large volumes of multi-page invoices must be accurately processed by hand on the day each is received. Processing challenges included: each invoice layout was different, the system had to capture invoice line items spanning multiple pages, validation of key fields against an SQL database required, auto-fill of “Name and Address” fields from SQL database required, and often the fax images were of low quality. The manual process of keying



in the invoice data is error prone and time intensive.

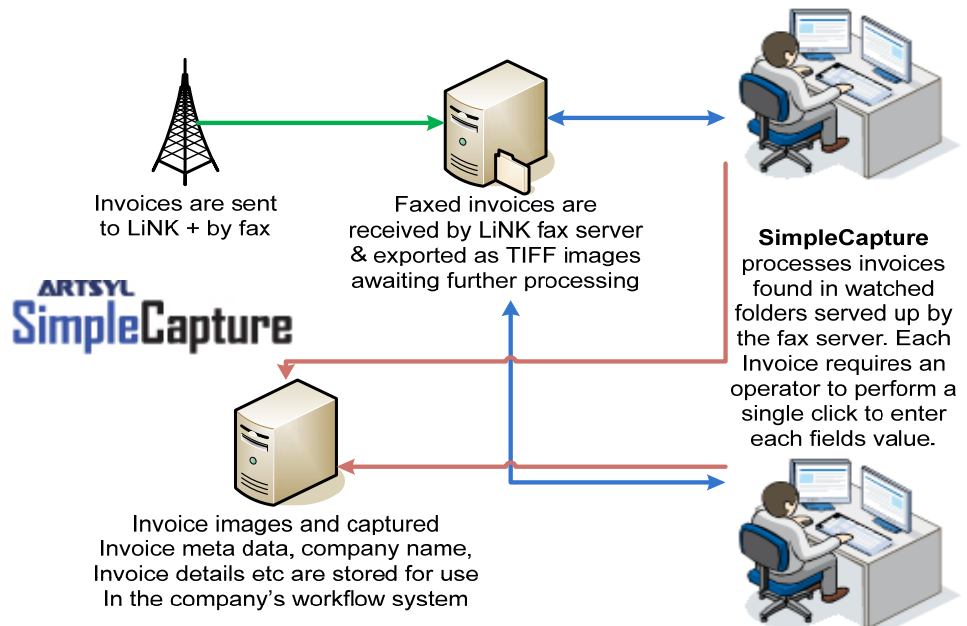
Paczkowski says SimpleCapture collects and automatically imports scanned invoices from two sources: the company's fax server, which receives faxes sent primarily by truck drivers transporting freight for clients, or from United Parcel Service, which scans and transmits the documents via computer network.

The application associates each source with a document profile or profiles. Each profile describes the type of document and the processing choices associated with it. The product ships with default profiles for commonly imaged documents such as invoices or bills of lading. But custom profiles may also be created and Link + created its own profile scripted in XML. SimpleCapture v2.0 features a profile editor which gives users the option of creating or editing profiles without scripting.

Previously, it required five Link + plus employees to manually key invoice data into the company's database. Three issues delayed the firm's adoption of an automated solution: a huge number of invoice formats, inconsistent image quality and concerns about training and acceptance by employees.

### Too Many Invoice Variations

Most invoice capture applications require templates which tell the software where to find the data. However,



Paczkowski says that Link + receives so many different invoice formats, a template-based capture product wouldn't be feasible. "We would have had to create a template for each invoice design and new templates would have to be added often. It would have been too time consuming and expensive," he says.

The company also investigated even more expensive alternatives which claimed to automatically find the correct data on any invoice without templates. But Paczkowski says this option still requires extensive customization and months of testing and troubleshooting. Even at their best, he says their error rate wouldn't justify the high cost of purchase, professional services and training – or the lengthy disruption of their processes and high potential for employee frustration.

On the other hand, Paczkowski says SimpleCapture's "Click-to-Capture" interface has been accurate and quickly accepted by employees. SimpleCapture was designed with invoices and other variable forms in mind. It presents the operator with each document image and the operator simply clicks on each snippet of required information – regardless of its location. SimpleCapture recognizes the data and immediately presents the results beside the document image. Two employees can now capture as many invoices in the time it previously took five. "SimpleCapture was easy to set up and use and it was far less expensive than the alternatives we evaluated," says Paczkowski.

### Poor Image Quality

Even under the best circumstances, extracting data from faxes is much more difficult than when a document is cap-

tured by a document scanner operated by a specialist. And these aren't the best circumstances. Truck drivers fax the documents and they can be wrinkled and dirty. At best, Paczkowski says image quality has been inconsistent. SimpleCapture's image cleanup features reduce recognition errors and its efficient user interface has made it quick and easy to correct recognition errors caused by poor quality documents.

### Training and Acceptance

Paczowski was concerned employees would object to learning new software and that it would be expensive and time consuming to train them. Production document capture software can require several days of training and sophisticated technical skills. "They have been comfortable with SimpleCapture," he says. Even worse than the last time and required skills, the vendor frequently charges thousands of dollars for the training and travel expenses are the customer's responsibility. Link+ staff has been able to use SimpleCapture within minutes.

Knowledgeable service and support are also important

and Link + has found these with Artsyl business partner Connectis Group. The Toronto-based firm helped Link + evaluate SimpleCapture by setting up demonstrations using the company's own documents. When Link + selected SimpleCapture, Connectis worked with the customs agent's information technology staff to install, configure and test the solution.

### Integration with Custom Back End

Link + has been developing its own customs brokerage software, called Broker Plus 2000, since the early 1990s. It was important that their invoice processing software could be easily integrated with this system. SimpleCapture's flexible, modern, .NET® architecture and variety of export options fit their needs. This made it feasible to programmatically integrate SimpleCapture and BrokerPlus. The applications now work together to automatically place invoice data directly into the BrokerPlus database in the appropriate format and location.

The customs software translates the data it receives from SimpleCapture into a form which the Canadian customs office can read, tags the information with the correct codes then transmits it to the government agency.

Thanks in part to SimpleCapture, Link + can clear a shipment through customs in as little as two hours.

### Next Steps

When this was written, SimpleCapture had been in production at Link+ for several months but not all of the company had been converted from manual capture, in part because the company was also changing its workflow tools and processes. Paczkowski says the company didn't want to introduce too many changes too quickly for employees. When the company completes the transition, they will process 6,000 invoices per month.



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