

WHITEPAPER

Benefits of electronic faxing in the healthcare industry

Why you should upgrade from traditional fax machines

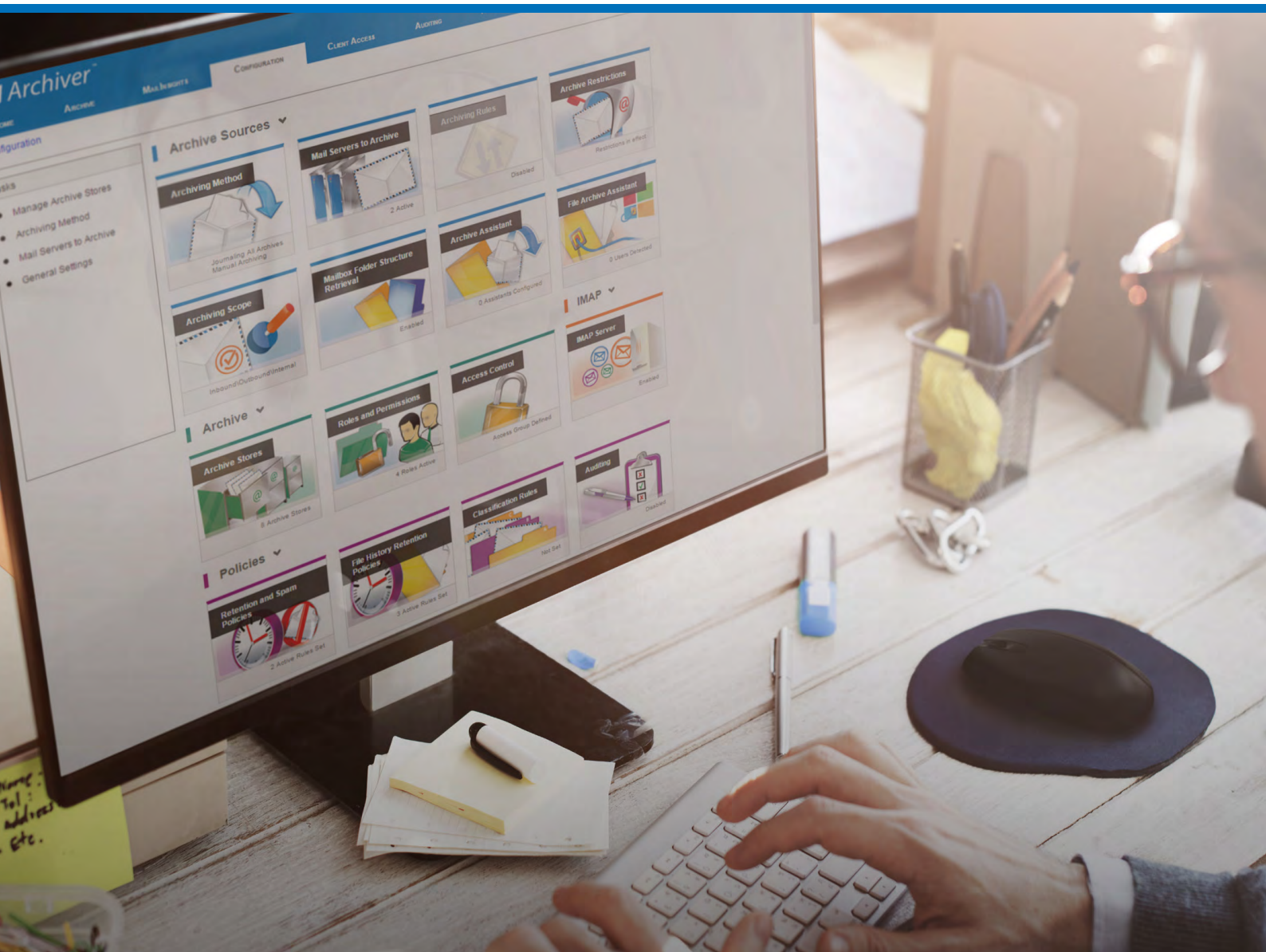





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Introduction

Even though data regulations have gained more importance in recent years with higher consumer awareness and sharper penalties, the healthcare industry still has much more to worry about than most traditional businesses.

In addition to following all typical regulations, healthcare businesses must also act in accordance with strict HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) guidelines and the HITECH (Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health) or face harsh punishments. Faxing has made staying compliant in a time of increased requirements almost impossible without implementing a more modern solution.

Consider coming back from break and entering the hospital, doctor's office, or other medical establishment where you work. Patients are overbooked, insurance is giving you trouble, and a coworker has called in sick. You're understaffed.

On top of all this, you have to print out electronic documents, bring them to the fax machine, enter the number properly, wait for each page to fax, wait for a confirmation page, then properly dispose of or store the physical copy (often in addition to creating an electronic copy for storage).

With all the distractions of the day, any number of these steps could easily result in an error.

In 2018, for instance, OhioHealth's Grant Medical Center was discovered to have been sending faxes with patient information to the wrong person for months, including personal information, which constitutes HIPAA violations. While the fine hasn't yet been announced, this level of repeated fax violation and neglect will likely have severe consequences.

Another simple human error put New York-based Mount Sinai St. Luke's Hospital in court. The hospital has already agreed to pay \$387,000 in fines for accidentally faxing private health information to two patients' employers rather than to the patients themselves. On top of the fines already paid, St. Luke's is also being sued as a result.

Such simple mistakes that lead to large HIPAA fines, duress for those affected, and even potential criminal repercussions, are not rare. Dialing a wrong number may cost a healthcare company not only tens of thousands of dollars, but also its reputation.

Even without error, a traditional fax machine costs time and productivity; it typically transmits at the rate of one minute per page. Based on the information that the machine must condense - a document consisting of words, images, or both - the process may take even longer.

And this says nothing of the various faxing-related issues that can interfere with daily responsibilities, such as dealing with a frustrating paper jam or running out of ink. Additionally, small offices fighting over one fax machine or a busy phone line can eat into potential productive hours.

Whether it's a mistyped number or mishandling storage of the documents, errors can result in HIPAA fines that have a range of \$100 to \$50,000 per incident, up to \$1.5 million per year. In 2018 alone, a [total](#) of \$28,683,400 worth of HIPAA violation fines were levied.

Let's review a few things each office should do to make sure their faxes stay compliant if they aren't using a digital fax maker log:

- Use a cover letter
- Save speed-dial numbers for frequent fax recipients to prevent misdialing numbers
- Verify any new numbers with a test fax
- Put policies in place to immediately respond if a fax is sent to the wrong number
- Put policies in place for storing, copying, and disposing of faxes
- Make sure your fax machine is in a secure room where only authorized personnel can access it
- Make sure delivery is successful.

From the wasted time-resources spent sending a fax to the high possibility of human error, it's difficult to see why traditional faxing is still such a dominant means of communication, particularly in the medical field.

Many doctor's offices, hospitals, and other medical offices have begun moving all physical files to become electronic ones, often opting to take steps such as writing patient notes directly onto a computer instead of paper.

In fact, governments are pushing for this electronic storage. The US passed the HITECH Act in 2009, or the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act to motivate the implementation of electronic health records (EHR) and electronic medical records (EMR).

One important section of the HITECH Act addresses the privacy and security concerns associated with the electronic transmission of health information, in part, through several provisions that strengthen the civil and criminal enforcement of the HIPAA rules.

Another push is resulting from the Meaningful Use provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which offers financial incentives to healthcare providers that not only implement EHR technology but also demonstrate the use of EHR technology in quantifiable or qualitative ways.

Behind both of these initiatives is the goal of reducing errors, making data and records more readily available, providing improved doctor-specialist-patient collaboration, and automating processes such as e-prescribing to reduce costs and time.



The challenge remains: what to do about faxes?

Despite the financial and legislative benefits of moving to e-records, some healthcare organizations have implemented e-documentation in some areas of the business, but not others, perhaps believing that the traditional fax machine can never become extinct.

As the push to e-records continues, how will your organization collaborate with other health providers without a flexible, integrated, electronic system? The challenge of having to fax documents manually will only become magnified as more applications become e-fax friendly.

Why should some applications be formatted for electronic submission of records, but not others? Considering the annoyances and problems with traditional faxing, the push to switch from physical records to EHR and, most notably, the importance of staying compliant, it's vital to adopt a digital fax log.

Beyond wasting time and money as well as adding stress to your office, the potential downfalls of not being compliant with data regulations in regards to fax include:

- Federal fines for HIPAA noncompliance depend on perceived negligence found within the organization. HIPAA outlines certain tiers to sort violations, from not knowing about a breach to being willfully negligent about a known breach
- The violating party must pay a consumer's actual damages and attorney's fees, and injunctive relief
- Potential criminal repercussions.

In order to simply avoid the negative effects of traditional faxing and more easily stay compliant, organizations need to consider a set of IT solutions that allow for simple, secure data and electronic message management.

GFI FaxMaker offers organizations a secure, paper-free way to send faxes with a means of recording what was sent, where it was sent, and when it was sent.

Doing more than just protecting your company from fines, GFI FaxMaker can help_

- Increase efficiency, reduce labor costs, and boost productivity because employees no longer have to waste time waiting at a fax machine; instead, they can automatically send, receive, and manage fax communications straight from their desktop
- Leverage existing applications, such as back- and front-office applications and messaging, without incurring additional software or training costs
- Improve your business process by immediately allowing GFI FaxMaker users to quickly and easily send, receive, and manage fax communications from their desktops by composing faxes in a word processor or via email.
- Electronic faxing is paper-free. That means it is not only secure and efficient, but it will also help your company reduce its carbon footprint.

The most important feature of GFI FaxMaker, though, is **compliance**. Automatic inbound routing sends faxes directly to the recipient's desktop, eliminating the risk of being discarded or read by an unintended recipient.

To further assist healthcare organizations' imperative for compliance, and help you avoid fines, struggle, and more, you can complement GFI FaxMaker with GFI Archiver.

GFI Archiver archives files, folders, calendar entries and emails in a safe, secure and tamper-proof way.

To further assist your necessity for compliance, helping you avoid fines and complications, this combination of GFI FaxMaker and GFI Archiver help you:

- Archive emails, files and calendar entries. Its File Archiving Assistant (FAA) enables you to share files between users and store them centrally and safely without relying on online storage providers.
- Secure archiving for compliance and minimize legal risk. Archive emails and files in their original state – in a central, tamper-proof store – to help with compliance, e-discovery, and internal investigations.
- Identify business issues and legal risks as well as manage productivity with reports that draw from the business-critical information in your archive.

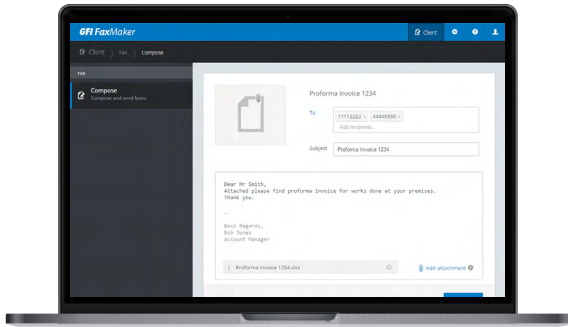
Other important features of GFI Archiver include:

- Your users' email history and old file versions are always available for quick retrieval via the GFI Archiver interface
- Stored emails are genuine and tamper-free with message-auditing functionality
- Users have the ability to save on storage costs by keeping just one central copy of an email and its attachments
- Every message, attachment and file is automatically indexed before it is archived, enabling you to search and retrieve faster.

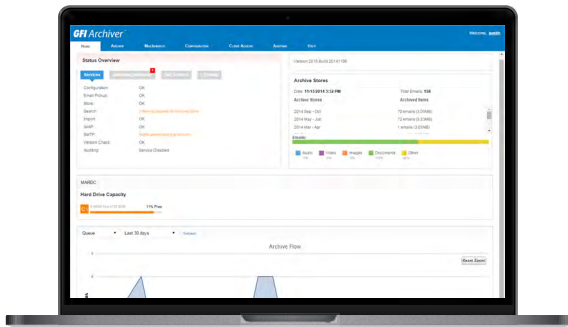
With GFI FaxMaker and GFI Archiver, you can conduct business knowing that you're following regulations and best practices in regards to fax storage, access, and searchability while increasing productivity and updating a still-useful technology to modern simplicity.



Get you **FREE FaxMaker & Archiver trial!**



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