Behinderten-Werk Main-Kinzig (BWMK), a German non-governmental organization (NGO) providing a range of services for disabled people, enables businesses in its county of Main-Kinzig to do well by doing good.

German law sets quotas for businesses to hire disabled people and imposes taxes for missing these quotas. But companies can get refunds by outsourcing work to organizations such as BWMK, which trains the disabled under its care to staff 10 facilities that provide services such as document management, metalworking, woodworking, farming and catering. In addition, BWMK’s output carries only a 7 percent value-added tax instead of the standard 16 percent.

BWMK’s major document management service is scanning, and its biggest scanning customer is a commercial bank located in Frankfurt, Germany. “We didn’t get this job just because we can help the bank meet its disabled hiring quota,” said Michaela Reil, head of BWMK’s scanning facilities. “The bank has very high standards. If we don’t deliver the quality and volume they require, we’ll be out of a job.”

Two BWMK facilities fulfill the bank’s orders by employing physically disabled people, 60 at Hanau-Grossauheim and 40 at Gelnhausen.

The Hanau-Grossauheim facility captures 60,000 images daily from bank credit documents, including legal correspondence, insurance policies, and other business and personal credit paperwork. Documents arrive overnight by courier to be scanned from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

Four BÖWE BELL + HOWELL Copiscan 8080 production scanners produce images from about two-thirds of the documents. Two Minolta book scanners handle bound documents, such as financial statements. Ten Panasonic flatbed scanners are deployed for stapled documents, which the bank does not permit to be separated.

The bank requires same-day turnaround from BWMK to enable its credit service center employees to access loan documents needed to alert borrowers on the status of their applications. Deadlines are noon, 2 p.m. and by the end of the business day. Images are exported and transmitted every 15 minutes over a direct line to the bank. After scanning, BWMK stores the paper documents for two months until the bank checks them and authorizes their shredding.
“We have had no problems with the BÖWE BELL + HOWELL scanners,” said Ms. Reil. “They’re cost-effective and durable. That’s a good thing, since our document volumes and time constraints prevent us from handling them sensitively. The scanners also enable us to qualify our workers with employable skills. If an employee is a proficient scanner operator, we may have them learn another job as well.”

Data capture software for the scanners is Input Accel from EMC Captiva. Paradatac PROSAR AIDA software provides recognition and indexing by document categories. Barcodes are applied before scanning to identify a file of a particular bank customer, and then checked with a hand scanner to verify that the file is complete. The bar-coded files go to the bank’s central archive.

Seven Million Pages Scanned for New Online HR System

Meanwhile, for much of 2006, BWMK’s Gelnhausen facility scanned 60,000 to 70,000 pages per day to provide input for the bank’s new online human resources records system. BWMK saved the images on compact discs, which it sent to the bank to be fed into its system.

Starting with files for 30,000 employees in April, the 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily operation met its initial commitment of 4.5 million pages by Sept. 1. Operators continued to scan some 40,000 pages a day, reaching a total of approximately 7 million by the project’s end in October 2006.

BWMK put three BÖWE BELL + HOWELL Spectrum 8080 scanners on this job after testing them for speed and freedom from paper jams. Besides posing the challenge of having to “go from 0 to 100” at startup, as Ms. Reil put it, the project included many hard-to-read old, yellow and fragile records of bank employees—some with tenures of 20 years or more.

Special features on the scanners ensure smooth production of quality images from these records. The Spectrum scanner’s VirtualReScan™ (VRS) software automatically checks and corrects document images with varying levels of brightness and contrast without having to stop and reset the settings each time an odd document is fed.

In addition, VRS works with the Spectrum scanner’s ultrasonic multifeed detection feature to prevent the tendency of the older documents to be fed two or more pages at a time, omitting critical data in those documents. VRS displays a message on the operator’s personal computer indicating that a multifeed has occurred.

The scanner then pauses so that documents can be removed, placed back into the feeder and automatically refed. VRS automatically deletes the bad image (one document scanned on top of another) and keeps all good images in the proper order. In contrast, some scanners can tell the operator if a multifeed occurred but leave no way of solving the problem other than to scan the entire batch again.

Growth Potential at Third Facility

A third scanning facility, at Hanau Wolfgang, employs 20 physically disabled people, provided by a temporary placement agency. The facility currently has a workflow of 1,000 document images per day — most of them captured from documents for the City of Hanau, a number of small companies and other clients. Ms. Reil expects this scanning volume to grow substantially in the near future. The facility uses one BÖWE BELL + HOWELL 8000 Series scanner and two Panasonic flatbed scanners.

Taken altogether, the work at the three BWMK scanning facilities provides a shining example of how business bottom-line interests and the needs of a caring society can be met at the same time.