



APtimise
Simple Accounts Payable



Accounts Payable
is Changing:
Your Guide to an
Automated Future.

A whitepaper from APtimise



The Untapped Potential of Accounts Payable

The Accounts Payable (AP) team is the unsung hero of any organisation. After all, AP pays the bills and keeps the lights on, but its hard work is often overlooked.

Over the years, as organisations embraced time-saving solutions and looked towards more efficient processes, AP typically slipped through the cracks. In fact, it would be fair to say that AP has been the business blind spot for many SMEs, but things are changing. Today's Financial Directors (FDs) are recognising that AP is an untapped area that's poised for transformation.

In this whitepaper, we discuss the evolving role of today's FD as they consider new strategies for AP.

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It's time to rethink Accounts Payable

Many business leaders wish that their internal teams could spend less time on rudimentary tasks and focus more attention on strategic initiatives that help business growth.

Automating AP processes removes the need for repetitive, manual work, so staff can focus their time and talent on more productive pursuits.

The automation of AP can reap many dividends:

- AP teams can use the time saved to explore new ways to grow the business
- AP teams can better manage short-term cashflow, as automation features built-in checks that reduce the potential for human error
- Cutting down manual work means that there's more time to focus on nurturing supplier relationships, fostering greater flexibility to negotiate invoice payments
- FDs enjoy more control and transparency over how they process, approve, store and pay invoices

AP teams can focus their efforts on making sure their company's processes conform to corporate policies, and industry regulations and visibility? In summary, by automating AP, FDs can make a positive impact on the bottom line.

Transforming the number-crunching culture

Now that technology has enabled SMEs to automate their AP processes, the next step is to move away from manual work, so that staff can focus their time on development – both of their business and careers.

Many AP teams manually enter details from invoices that have arrived by email – or even by post – and, for businesses that use Purchase Order (PO) numbers, have to match those invoices to POs. This process is laborious, time-consuming and open to data input errors.

FDs and other decision-makers are often required to sign off hard-copy payment approvals. The invoice is then returned to AP to pay via another system, such as online banking. This means there's a lack of visibility throughout the process, so there's no easy way to check on the status of an invoice.

In contrast, automation of AP gives you control and visibility at every stage of invoice processing.

Accounts Payable automation: It's about time and money

With an end-to-end automated AP platform, FDs can enjoy improved efficiency across the entire invoice payment process: Capture, Process, Approve, Schedule and Authorise, and Pay.



Let's look at those stages individually

1 Capture

The leading automated AP solutions will capture incoming emailed invoices or scanned hardcopy invoices, and will log the relevant data and match PO numbers for businesses that require them. They will also capture vital information, such as item description, VAT rates and amounts, supplier address and more. Therefore, no keying is required, so AP staff are freed up from a repetitive and time-consuming task.



2 Process

The leading automated AP technologies flag any potential duplicate invoices, so businesses avoid paying the same invoice twice. They can also highlight any discrepancies that might indicate a fraud attempt, and automatically code invoices at a line item level, speeding up the process and reducing the risk of human error.



3 Approve

The best AP platforms will enable organisations to route invoice approvals via pre-defined rules to automate this step, including enabling sign-off from multiple approvers, wherever they are.



4 Schedule and Authorise

FDs should expect their automated AP solution to give them a clear overview of when invoices are due, so they can manage payments and keep cash in the business as long as possible. This, paired with faster processing, also enables FDs to take advantage of any early payment benefits and gives them full visibility of which invoices have been signed off and which are still awaiting approval.



5 Pay

Following invoice approval, users can enable automated AP solutions to connect securely with the company's banking system, make payments and even automatically generate and distribute remission advices. They should also log invoices as paid in the company's accounting system.



Many FDs will be surprised at how simple it can be to implement an automated AP solution. The leading AP platforms require very little training and will integrate seamlessly with all the main accounting systems.

The benefits of Accounts Payable automation

By automating their AP processes, FDs can expect the following benefits

- **Cost savings:** Automation reduces the time it takes companies to process invoices, leading to lowered total cost of ownership
- **Increased efficiency:** When repetitive manual processes are removed, the AP process is faster, easier and much more accurate, meaning staff can focus their time on adding value to the business
- **Improved internal controls:** The leading automated AP solutions will enable operators to access their files online via interactive dashboards, meaning they can manage their invoices at any time, wherever they are
- **Optimised working capital:** Supplier payments can be timed precisely, so finance teams can make informed decisions, whether they are taking advantage of early payment incentives or timing payments for the latest possible date
- **More organised invoicing:** Improved accuracy and record-keeping make it easier for AP teams to prepare for audits
- **Maximised short-term cash flow:** AP teams and FDs can enjoy full control of their invoice processing and cash flow with full end-to-end visibility of the process

In addition, the leading solutions come with bank-grade security measures to defend against cyberattacks and mitigate the extent of any breaches.

How legal software innovator LEAP cut invoicing processing time in half

LEAP is a leading provider of legal software for law firms.

Its technology is used by more than 12,000 legal professionals in the UK. As a medium-sized company at the cutting edge of technology, it is always looking for innovative ways to operate more effectively.

LEAP's UK finance director, Raj Ahluwalia, looked to technology to save time and improve operational efficiency.

"Often finance departments are the last to innovate - they're typically very traditional," Ahluwalia says.

Ahluwalia turned to APtimise to automate invoicing, saving time and making the AP process more efficient end-to-end.

With minimal training, LEAP's AP team could say goodbye to repetitive manual processes, and focus more time and energy towards helping the company expand.

"We've saved half our accounts payable team's time and saved us from hiring anyone new," Ahluwalia adds. "APtimise has given me a level of comfort, knowing that a supplier cannot be paid without proper approvals," Ahluwalia concludes.

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