SAP Concur

Building a Business Case for AP Automation

How Accounts Payable Professionals Can Secure Buy-In for Automated Invoicing

Table of Contents

Helping Others at Your Organization See the Benefits of Automation

You Love the Idea of Automated Invoice Management
If your invoice process is manual or partially automated, it's not operating at its best. Accounts payable professionals know this.

Meanwhile, finance and IT roles are changing, with stakeholders weighing in more on decisions that significantly impact the business. And as more companies shift to hybrid work and overall digital transformation, they're seeing how automation and easy access to systems is key to their future efficiency and growth.

But your company's leadership might not know the true difference between a simple digitized process and a fully automated one. Online banking, payment processes, and spreadsheets are a step in the right direction – but don't constitute a fully automated system on their own.
A modern, fully automated invoice management process should also be mobile, with easy, centralized, and near real-time access to data through the cloud.

In your role, you need to be ready to address change and confidently back up your reasoning for adopting new technology. Use this guide to build a business case for fully automated invoice management – and help secure buy-in from your company's key stakeholders.

Obstacles to Strategic Goals

Recent research found that common business operations and digital transformation goals include freeing employees from mundane tasks to focus on strategic work (53%), digitally transforming their overall finance process (48%), leveraging technology to support business continuity to address business climate changes (49%).

However, many businesses face similar challenges in reaching these goals. When your invoice processing is automated, people are free to focus on making the business run better.

Before AP Automation

44%
of businesses find it difficult to track spending trends and behaviors

43%
lack well defined and easy to follow expense and invoice policies

13 Hours
spent processing vendor invoices each week

After AP Automation

22%
reduction in misplaced invoices.

$44k
in estimated annual cost savings after implementing vendor invoice management solutions

12 Hours
estimated weekly hours saved per finance / accounting employee

Businesses are also resistant to change because they don't want to risk "good enough" for something that, in the end, could prove to be worse. But moving from ad-hoc, manual invoicing to a smarter, cloud-based — and even mobile — invoice process provides value across the board.

Source: Analysys Mason 2022, Travel, Expense, and Vendor Invoice Management Study
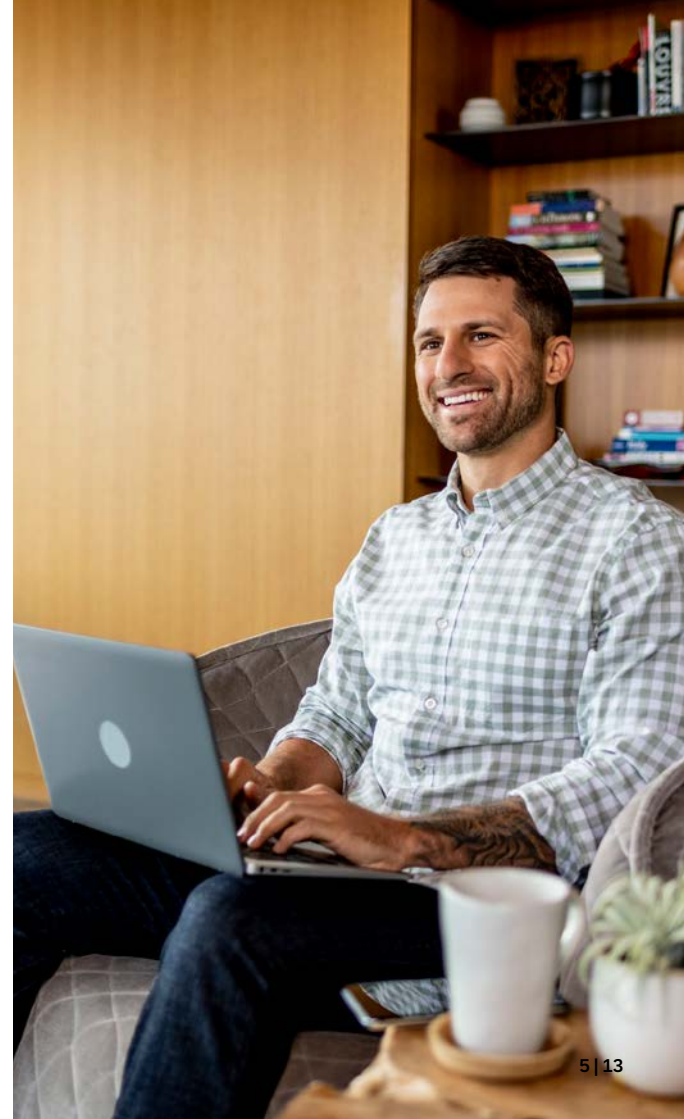
Find Your Allies and Your Audience

The best way to get support for an automated invoice management solution is by creating a groundswell from the bottom up.

- Managers have to review and approve invoices.
- AP personnel need to process invoices and reconcile budgets.
- The IT department needs to manage and compute all the data.
- And your executives need to get the big picture.

When your teams have to jump through hoops to manage invoices, they're:

- Frustrated by a meticulous and time-consuming activity.
- Distracted from important work.
- Upset when vendor payments get delayed.

The earlier you involve these stakeholders, the more likely you are to eliminate potential roadblocks along the way.

See Where Interests Align and Engage Stakeholders

As a member of accounts payable, you can help key stakeholders understand the new technology and the unique benefits for their area of business. Identify shared values to help them focus on what unites them rather than what separates them.

Use this chart to help decision-makers with different goals see where their interests align.

	Streamlining Processes	Data Security and Compliance	Visibility Into Spend	Cost Control and Savings	Employee Safety, Satisfaction, and Support
Finance Leader	X	X	X	X	X
IT	X	X			X
Company Leadership	X	X	X	X	X

Get Your Finance Team on Board

Your accounts payable team can be your strongest ally. They know first-hand the frustration of a fragmented process, but when they understand how effortless, connected, and transparent the process can be when vendor invoice management is automated, they'll be on your side.

Controllers care about:
- Getting a complete view of employee and vendor spend
- Creating and managing spend policies
- Minimizing missed opportunities due to lack of data
- Supporting additional revenue growth with current systems
- Containing costs

Your AP peers care about:
- Locating vendor invoices and expenses in the workflow
- Making timely payments
- Getting visibility into spend
- Capturing early payment discounts
- Reducing time to payment
- Ensuring managers review invoices before approving them
- Improving the approval and submittal process

What Invoice Automation Can Do for Your Business

Adopting fully automated invoice management lets you:

- See the big picture of the organization's entire spend, not just parts of it.
- Free up time to spend on things like negotiating better rates for the company.
- Get rid of manual paperwork and data entry.
- Ensure compliance across the organization.
- Gain complete visibility into all sources of spend, including purchase orders, e-invoices, P-card spending, supplier networks, and more.
- Automate the entire AP process by leveraging digital, OCR technology data-entry points.
- Reduce processing time, manual entry, and paper trails.
- Proactively time payments to maximize discounts and never again miss a due date.

Make IT Your Champion

Your IT department is critical to a smooth transition, and they have a lot on their plate. Be sure to address the issues they care about.

CIO/IT leaders care about:
- New software support
- New software integration
- Implementation time
- Data security
- Compliance with data privacy regulations

Invoice automation can support these concerns by:
- Connecting with your existing systems so IT doesn't have to build new integrations.
- Using cloud-based technology for easier system upgrades, software updates, and seamless data integrations.
- Providing reliable performance and security; for example, SAP® Concur® solutions provide secure hosting facilities and audits, and meets current compliance and security standards.
- Offering end-user training, resources, and administration for reliable support.

Respond to Common IT Team Objections

" We don't have the resources to switch
to automation."

With a cloud-based solution there is no software or hardware to buy,
install, maintain, or upgrade. That means we can be up and running
quickly. And because the solution is simple and intuitive, getting our
staff trained and ready to use it is easy.

" It's not a good time to change our process."

There is rarely a perfect time to make a change. Once you see how
easy it is to deploy a cloud-based mobile app, you'll see we can't
afford to wait to make this change and proactively address this painful,
frustrating, and costly process.

Address Finance and Business Leadership's Concerns

Company leadership cares about total value, ROI, and consensus from all leaders in the organization. You can show how fully automated invoice management translates to much more than just a better invoicing process.

The CEO/owner cares about:

- ROI on purchases
- Employee satisfaction
- Implementation time
- Data security
- Product scalability

The CFO/finance leader cares about:

- Providing strategic value and supporting business growth
- Discovering opportunities through better data visibility
- Controlling spend
- Ensuring compliance

In your conversations with company leaders, highlight how invoice automation addresses these concerns by:

- **Giving visibility into spending across the organization.** A fully automated invoice management platform pulls together all the invoice data into one place so you can route it, approve it, and get it paid.

- **Eliminating paper and delivering all the data needed for processing inside the system.** SAP Concur solutions scan and verify invoices using Optimal Character Recognition (OCR) technology, so you don't have to.

- **Optimizing payments.** Pay vendors strategically to grab available discounts, and to increase buying and negotiation power.

- **Staying on top of invoices.** No more lost, late, or duplicate invoices. A powerful reporting engine, audit trails, and curated workflows give you all the data you need to make strategic recommendations.

Respond to Common Finance and Business Leader Objections

❝ We don't have the budget."

❝ How much does the average company save by automating?"

Talking Points:
- An automated invoice management system saves money by making employees more productive and eliminating out-of-policy spending.
- Cloud-based software makes it easy and inexpensive to get started, and ongoing costs are low.
- After using a vendor invoice management solution, businesses estimated saving $44K annually, saw positive ROI 8 months after implementation and their finance team saved an estimated 122 hours per week.*

❝ How much will it cost?"

❝ Our current solution works. Why should we change?"

Talking Points:
- Consider the time it takes the back-office to check for accuracy, plus time for managers to review, approve, and pay vendor invoices. Multiply that time by the yearly number of invoices.
- A cloud-based mobile app can help streamline that process and make employees happier.

How SAP Concur Solutions Can Help

SAP Concur has built a thriving global community of businesses powered by connection. Connected solutions help you drive growth by revealing the risks and opportunities hidden in your spend management data. And our connected network of businesses allows you to unlock the collective knowledge, data, and buying power you need to reach your goals. In short, we grow with you.

With Concur Invoice, you can:
- Get timely and accurate reporting for accruals and cash flow so you can make the right decisions for your business
- Eliminate wasted time by putting an end to tedious manual invoice processing
- Monitor invoices easily, manage exceptions, and speed up vendor payments
- Track and approve invoices on the go with our mobile app

What's Your ROI for Automated Invoice Management?
Use this tool to calculate how much time and money you could save each year by automating your accounts payable.

Calculate your ROI: Concur Invoice Business ROI Calculator

Want More Information?
Buyer's guide to accounts payable automation

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