Tips to StreamlineYour End-to-End AP Invoice Process

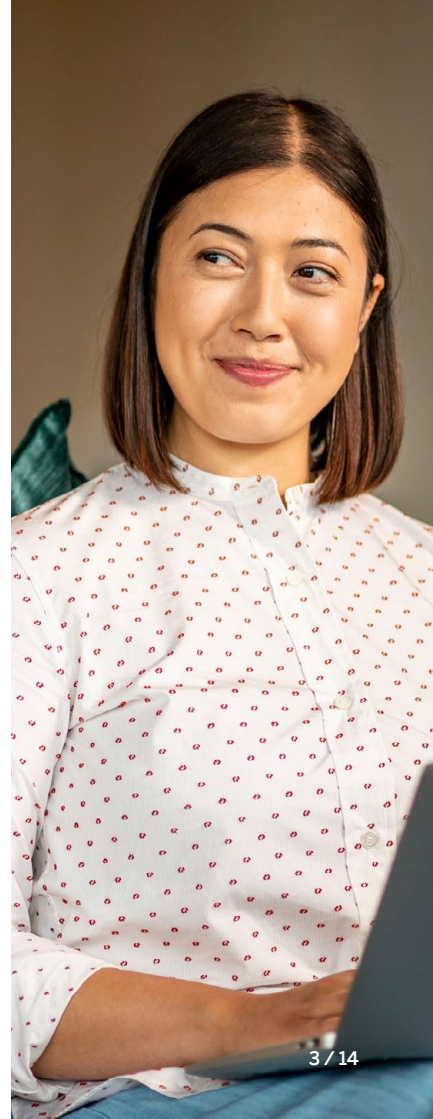THE BEST RUN **SAP**

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Introduction

In order to grow your business, you need to focus on planning and strategy. But if you're like most finance and business leaders we speak to, you may find you're being held back.

Streamlining – and even removing – these time-consuming, error-prone tasks is essential if you and your team want to deliver the insights and analysis your business needs as you plan for growth.

From the moment your business receives invoices, right through to payment, there are a number of steps you can take to cut manual data entry, improve accuracy, and ensure you pay within your ideal timeframes.

This eBook will show you how intelligent automation and machine learning technology can free up time so you can focus on growth.

Preparing Your Business for Growth

On your path to growth, you'll be assessing your systems and processes to determine which parts of your operation are scalable and which aren't. A paper-based AP invoice process is the perfect example of an operation that just doesn't scale well.

If you're drowning in paper now, imagine what it will be like in two, five, or 10 years' time. At a time when you're probably being asked to do more with less, growing your team may not be an option.

A streamlined and automated invoice management solution can enable your AP team to work smarter – not harder – and ensure you're well poised for growth.

$44K

on average, in annual cost savings[1]

122 hours

saved weekly per finance or accounting team[1]

$43,000

estimated yearly amount saved using SAP® Concur® solutions for invoice management[1]

1. Analysys Mason 2022, Travel, Expense, and Vendor Invoice Management Study

Invoice Automation

Besides giving you time back, you'll also gain control and visibility of the end-to-end process so you can make smarter decisions about where and when you're spending money.

Automation gives you instantly accessible real-time information you can drill down into with ease. It revolutionizes financial planning and reporting. It means you're able to deliver the financial insights your business needs.

30%

of decision-makers in the US say they have the right systems in place to adapt to changing business needs[2]

"[Our accounting team] can pull data by supplier, by cost center or the approver.... It's a report, but it functions more like a data mining and analytical tool."

Nick Sanghvi, Accounts Payable Manager at Simons Foundation and Concur® Invoice user[3]

2. Leadership in a new era, Oxford Economics, 2021
3. Case study, Simons Foundation, concur.com

The Three Key Stages of the AP Invoice Process

Within the three key stages of the AP process, there are several common obstacles to watch for. But you can avoid common headaches by fully automating your invoice management. It can also help you streamline your processes, embrace best practices, get control of costs in the procure-to-pay (P2P) process, and prepare your business for growth.

Click the icons below for videos for each stage of the AP invoice process:
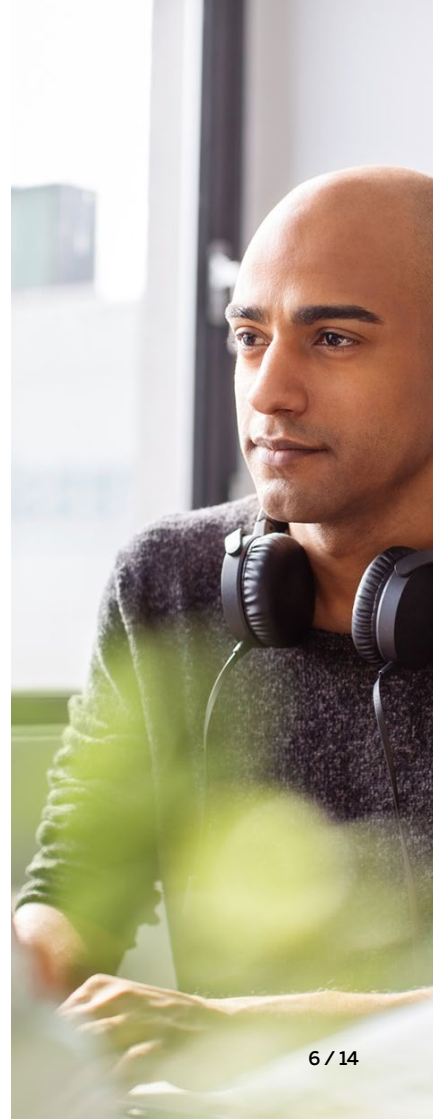
1

Invoice Receiving

2

Invoice Processing

3

Invoice Payment

Invoice Receiving: Three Tips to Streamline Your Process

1. **Centralize your invoices**

   The first step is to make sure invoices all arrive in one central location. Automation offers a way to do this. It's also good practice to send inaccurate invoices back to suppliers for correction before they go any further.

2. **Accept and encourage suppliers to submit invoices electronically**

   Set up an AP-specific email alias to receive all invoices from your suppliers. If there's resistance, explain they'll see benefits such as quicker processing and approvals, better visibility, and improved accuracy.

3. Implement machine learning technology

Data doesn't have to always be entered manually anymore. OCR (optical character recognition) ends this typical pain point by automatically converting physical invoices into digital form, extracting data from invoice images, and populating it into custom fields. This machine learning feature is central to many automated invoice management solutions, and it continues to get more intelligent and cost-effective.

$44K yearly

estimated money saved by implementing an automated invoice solution[4]

8 months

approximate time to see positive ROI after adopting automated invoice management[4]

"Prior to using SAP Concur solutions, our month-end process could be up to 15 days—or more, depending on what was going on that specific month. Once we had the SAP Concur platform in place and started using it efficiently, we reduced our close time to three days. And quite honestly, if we were in a pinch, we could probably close in a day."

Joe Lusby, Assistant Controller for Bishop-Wisecarver[5]

4. Analysys Mason 2022, Travel, Expense, and Vendor Invoice Management Study
5. Case study, Bishop-Wisecarver, concur.com

Invoice Approval: Four Tips to Streamline Your Process

1. **Create management workflows**

   The first step to improving efficiency is to understand the current picture. Map your current processes, identify where the bottlenecks are, and see how you can resolve them. For example, make sure every invoice goes straight to the invoice owner. Set internal service level agreements so everyone knows you've got a KPI you want to meet.

   To keep on top of the process, invoice automation solutions such as Concur® Invoice make sure all this happens, sending out reminders automatically and letting you see at a glance where every invoice is in the process.

2. **Implement a PO system**

   Purchase orders make it much easier to spot fraudulent invoices, errors, and mistakes. They're also a vital step in a robust P2P process. Concur Invoice offers PO, invoice receipt, approval, and payment information in a single system. It enables three-way matching – automatically checking what was ordered against what was received and invoiced, flagging any discrepancies along the way.

   "The value we get from Concur Invoice is a very streamlined workflow and process. We went from an extremely manual process zipping PDF files to having a workflow that goes from email into invoice capture to very easily coding, processing, and making payments directly in [the SAP Concur platform]."

   Sushene Swenson, Director of Management Company Operations, Trilantic[6]

6. Case study, Trilantic, concur.com

3. Get a mobile app solution

A mobile app means invoices can be approved on-the-go in a moment. It also puts an end to waiting for someone to return from a business trip and catch up on their email.

4. Optimize approvals

Does your CEO or CFO have to sign off on all invoices, or could lower-value invoices have different threshold levels? Invoice automation makes implementing different approval levels easy because it happens automatically. You can also see where an invoice has reached in the chain, making it easy to identify persistently slow approvers.

Insight: What's your AP process costing you?
Four Costs Hiding in Accounts Payable

On average, paper invoicing processes involve

13 hours
per week per employee[7]

11 days
to get approval
per invoice[7]

31%
consider duplicate invoices to be the biggest time and financial challenges, for companies worldwide not using a dedicated T&E and/or invoice management automation software[7]

4.8 / 5
SAP Concur mobile app rating in the Apple App Store[8]

7. Analysys Mason 2022, Travel, Expense, and Vendor Invoice Management Study
8. Apple App Store, SAP Concur mobile app

Invoice Payment: Four Tips to Streamline Your Process

1. **Leverage credit cards and digital payments**
   Using credit cards or digital payment technology saves you time and lets you to earn cash back simply by paying your bill on time.
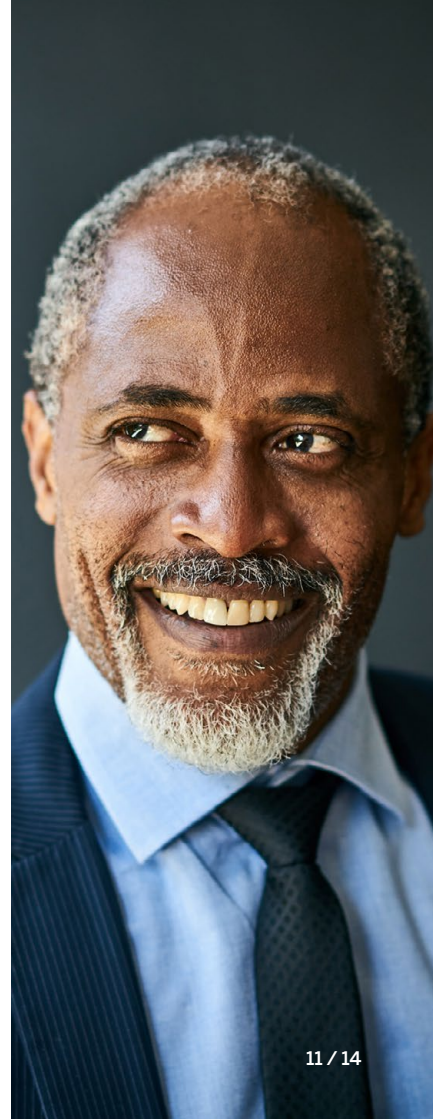
2. **Gather data for negotiations**
   Suppliers often give discounts, special terms, or preferential pricing to valuable customers. Automated invoice solutions make it easy to gather data to help you negotiate, make strategic supplier decisions, improve your P2P process, and free up working capital.

3. **Create a supplier portal**
   A supplier portal puts suppliers in control, saving both you and them time. Suppliers can log in to your system and track the status of orders and payments. Invoice automation solutions such as Concur Invoice include this functionality.

4. **Streamline payments**
   Invoice automation solutions often work with partners to add value to payment processes. For example, with SAP Concur solutions, you can choose a preferred payment provider to help better manage your cash flow and leverage existing bank relationships.

Top Benefits of Digitizing Invoice Management

43%

Increased organizational agility and resiliency

29%

Increased functional collaboration

28%

Increased process efficiency

25%

Increased visibility into company spending

25%

Reduced costs[9]

9. Leadership in a New Era, Oxford Economics, 2021

Find the Right Technology Partner

Vendor invoice management automation does all the heavy lifting when it comes to streamlining your AP invoice process. But to access all the benefits, the first step is to choose the right technology partner.

When you adopt SAP Concur solutions, you're working with the world's leading brand of invoice, expense, and travel solutions.

When you automate your AP processes with Concur Invoice, you gain speed and efficiency, as well as control and visibility of your spend to help maximize profitability and better prepare yourself to grow and evolve.

When you're preparing for growth, it's easy to focus on the customer-facing sections of the business. But the back-office systems are just as important. In fact, when your finance processes are streamlined, efficient, and automated, your business is much better equipped for the journey ahead. And you and your team are empowered to be the strategic leaders you want to be – and your business needs.
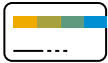
Start Optimizing Your Entire AP Process Today

If you're ready to start **streamlining** and **automating** your AP invoice processes, here's what to do next

Learn More About Automation

Find out how **Concur Invoice** helps you capture invoices quickly and accurately, stay on top of spend, streamline purchase requests, automate approvals, and spot inaccurate and duplicate invoices before they get paid.

See How Technology Streamlines Payments

Learn how to use technology to streamline your payment processes in this **short video**.

Build an Invoice Policy

Creating a policy for managing, storing, and processing supplier invoices helps ensure everyone is on the same page, your people spend less time on admin, and your suppliers get paid promptly. **This resource** has seven top tips to consider if you want to introduce an invoice policy, plus a template you can use.

Assess the Risk to Your AP Process

Managing risk and ensuring compliance is a vital part of every finance manager's role. **This tool** helps you understand the potential risks in your AP process, conduct a risk analysis, and identify the fix.

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About SAP Concur

SAP® Concur® is the world's leading brand for integrated travel, expense, and invoice management solutions, driven by a relentless pursuit to simplify and automate these everyday processes. The highly-rated SAP® Concur® mobile app guides employees through business trips, charges are directly populated into expense reports, and invoice approvals are automated. By integrating near real-time data and using AI to analyze transactions, businesses can see what they're spending, improve compliance, and avoid possible blind spots in the budget. SAP Concur solutions help eliminate yesterday's tedious tasks, make today's work easier, and support businesses to run at their best.

Learn more at concur.co.in or at the SAP Concur blog

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