Baltimore Ravens

Save close to 20 hours every month with MineralTree AP Automation

Overview

As evidenced by the team's penchant for making the playoffs and competing for Super Bowls, the habit of continuous improvement is evident throughout the entire Baltimore Ravens organization. One realm of the business where this excellence has been most prominent is the accounts payable department.

Senior Payables Manager Dana Cline and Director of Finance Reba Koppelman have functioned as a tandem team of two in this mission critical job function that keeps the entire organization running smoothly, and have led the department out of processes plagued with time-consuming manual tasks into an entirely paperless workflow defined by end-to-end efficiency.

The Challenge: Establishing a Proactive Approach

Cline and Koppelman, like many other individuals handling AP duties, were relying on entirely manual and paper-based workflows to get invoices coded, approved, and paid. But with over 2,500 vendors, they were starting to feel the pressure of a growing workload overwhelming an unscalable AP process.

"Every week our focus would inevitably slide away from what we were hoping to accomplish and fall to only the most urgent and essential tasks," explained Cline. "Rather than planning and accomplishing our accounts payable goals, we were working hard just to keep up."

➡ Shedding Inefficiency

Among the list of culprits behind this cumbersome workflow was the excessively large time commitment that comes with:

1. Manually entering and coding invoice data into the accounting system

2. Distributing hard copies of invoices to business departments for coding and approval

3. Printing, signing, postmarking, and mailing paper check

"The process of preparing, postmarking, and mailing paper checks alone was taking up three hours of my time every week," explained Cline. "And the execution of payments depended entirely on both Reba and I being present at the office, which put us at risk of holding up important payments if we needed to be away."

Moving Past a Point Solution

Cline and Koppelman took their first step toward addressing the challenges of manual AP by adopting a solution that digitizes the process of capturing invoice data and routing those invoices for approval, but quickly understood the limitations of point solutions that only address individual components of the accounts payable process.

"We were able to simplify a couple of the steps, but we weren't seeing the type of return we were looking for in the investment we had made," explained Koppelman. "Dana was still spending way too much time preparing check payments and trying to keep documents organized for future reference."

In spite of Cline's heroic efforts to manage all of the different paper copies of invoices and receipts, it was still a challenge to produce payment information upon request, whether it be requested by a business department head or an auditor."

Keeping Up with Suppliers

Then, there was also pressure coming from critical vendors who had announced that they will only accept payments made via ACH transfer starting in 2019.

"The transition to ACH is vital to our entire organization because we pay some of these vendors every week during the season," explained Cline. "I needed time to plan it out and ensure everything would go smoothly, but with our existing process, finding that time would be a huge challenge."

At this point, the Ravens realized that only an end-to-end AP automation solution would deliver the results they were looking for.

The Solution: MineralTree Invoice-to-Pay

"A key piece of criteria in our search for a solution was compatibility with NetSuite, the cloud-based accounting system to which we were transitioning," explained Koppelman. "Based on our past experience, it was clear that an integration with NetSuite was an important part of streamlining the end-to-end accounts payable process and getting the ROI we were looking for."

A Deep Integration with NetSuite

Among all of the available solutions on the market, MineralTree was the one that stood out to Cline and Koppelman as the most complete and viable option.

"MineralTree had the deepest integration with NetSuite that we could find," explained Cline. "It had the invoice data capture and approval routing we were looking for, but it also had advanced features that streamlined the process even further."

Among those features was MineralTree's bi-directional sync with NetSuite. This API-level integration continuously transfers data back and forth between MineralTree and the accounting system, creating one centralized access point for all payments data for Cline. Additionally, the different business departments in communication with vendors and auditors could now help themselves to transaction histories.

"I'm able to instantly sort all of the invoices by criteria like approval status and due date, and I can also schedule payments to be made automatically," continued Cline. "This enables me to maintain the same high standard of organization with just a fraction of the effort, which has opened up a lot of time for me."

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> **- Reba Koppelman**
> **Director of Finance**

Automatic Payment Execution

Another key feature for the Ravens was the seamless payment process with MineralTree. Quick access to a variety of payment methods, and full-service payment execution, frees up the aforementioned three hours every week that Cline had been dedicating to making check payments.

"With check payments off my plate, I've been able to focus on the transition to ACH," explained Cline. "We will be ready when any of our vendors make their transition."

Simple Implementation

When the Ravens were ready to implement MineralTree, the process was so seamless that Cline and Koppelman can hardly remember it happening six months after the fact.

"All I can remember is that we met our implementation goal with no hang-ups," recalled Koppelman. The new accounts payable process we signed up for was up and running in no time. It was a seamless transition that has resulted in a big step forward."

The Outcome: Business Impact Across the Organization

Moving the accounts payable process to the cloud alongside of NetSuite has made a big difference in the operational capabilities of both Cline and the Baltimore Ravens organization. "As a working mom facing the impending threat of snow days throughout season, I know that I can still keep processes moving regardless of where I need to be." said Cline. "This is a tremendous help to me, but also all of the other business departments depending on the timely payment to their vendors."

Time Savings

The Baltimore Ravens organization now saves nearly 20 hours every month that were previously buried underneath manual and inefficient processes. This is time that Cline has been able to redirect to the forward-thinking initiatives that impact the Ravens finance department beyond accounts payable.

Exceptional Cooperation Between Departments

"The online workflow helps everyone involved in the accounts payable process operate more efficiently," Cline explained. "With all pending approvals and payment history data visible on a web-based view within MineralTree, our business department heads feel empowered to manage everything themselves and stay on top of their approvals."

As a result, invoices that the Ravens used to pass around over email threads are less likely to fall through the cracks, and all vendors are more likely to be paid on time.

A Strategic Approach

Since implementation, Cline and Koppelman have both been able to step out of the weeds within the accounts payable process, and benefit from the more forward-thinking approach that automation has unlocked.

"We look forward to making even more improvements down the road as we continue to refine our AP process and as MineralTree continues rolling out new features," explained Koppelman.

BCCCS-(03222019)

Take the Next Step

See how MineralTree can help you streamline your payment process.

Contact us at (617) 299-3399 OR info@mineraltree.com