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POPULAR
PAYMENT
POSTS

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4 Reasons You Need A B2B Payments Strategy

Time-Saving Tips For Accounts Payable

Are You A Steward CFO?

Paper Is Out, Electronic Is In: Tracking The Rise Of Paperless

The Digital Transformation Of Accounts Payable Invoices



mineraltree®
AP and Payment Automation



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4 REASONS YOU NEED A B2B PAYMENTS STRATEGY

WHEN IT COMES TO [B2B PAYMENTS](#), THERE'S MORE AT STAKE THAN YOU THINK. WHILE YOU MAY NOT REALIZE IT, THERE IS TREMENDOUS ECONOMIC UPSIDE IF YOU TAKE A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO PROCESSING AND PAYING INVOICE.

Every invoice your company receives represents an opportunity: an opportunity to capitalize on the rewards of sound planning and execution, or an opportunity to fall victim to the perils of disorganization.

Time spent digging through your inbox to track down loose invoices and chasing down approvals only begins to scratch the surface of the wasted time and energy that is currently victimizing finance departments everywhere.

[New automated solutions](#) are changing the way businesses are approaching accounts payable, and enabling companies to [earn returns](#) on every invoice payment that they make. Here are four reasons you should consider adopting the more strategic approach that automated solutions provide:

1. Paper checks are costing you too much.

A study by the [Credit Research Foundation](#) found that almost 50% of B2B payments are processed with paper checks. MineralTree has found that among smaller businesses in its customer base, this percentage runs even higher.

When you think of all the highly advanced digital payment options in the world today, the idea of paper checks driving B2B relationships can seem unfounded. When you think of the fact that digital payments are [estimated to cost 90% less](#) to process than paper check transactions, this idea seems even more illogical.



“The most dangerous kind of waste is the waste we do not recognize.”

- Shigeo Shingo



If you're looking to capitalize on major cost savings like this, switching to digital payments should be an easy decision.

2. Time you spend manually entering data could be put to better use.

Time is arguably the most valuable resource in the world; so wouldn't you want your employees to spend it on more valuable tasks while automating accounts payable?

Running multiple processes for checks, ACH payments, and credit card payments is a lot of work and the time to manage each of these effectively starts adding up very quickly.

Establishing an automated invoice processing system has saved companies as much as [64 hours per month](#), and enabled them to redistribute their employees' extra time to more strategic and value-added initiatives that ultimately move their business forward.

3. Your bottom line is missing the benefits of corporate cards.

There are a [multitude of business cash-back credit cards](#) on the market today that can give your bottom line a steady surge of income to improve short-term cash flow, as well as provide working capital extensions available through their credit line.

In spite of these benefits, MineralTree found that [one-third of businesses](#) are not using corporate cards for vendor payments.

Making payments with a credit card can quickly transform your accounts payable team into a [tactical profit center](#).

4. You can capitalize on early payment discounts.

The Association for Information and Image Management [reported](#) that achieving significant early payments discounts – which provide as much as 2% back on all spending – is an added benefit to implementing an AP Automation System.

In most cases, the only thing preventing companies from obtaining these discounts is the failure to have an organized and streamlined payment process in place.

This is low-hanging fruit that drops right to your bottom line.

Are you ready to start taking a more strategic approach to your accounts payable process?



CONTACT MINERALTREE

for a complimentary assessment of your projected savings with AP Automation

TIME SAVING TIPS FOR ACCOUNTS PAYABLE

AS ALL ACCOUNTS PAYABLE MANAGERS KNOW, AP PROCESSING IS AMONG THE MOST MANUAL, TIME-CONSUMING, AND CUMBERSOME PROCESSES IN ACCOUNTING.

With [at least 50% of all B2B payments](#) being made manually with paper checks today, one thing is abundantly clear:

There is a world of opportunity to save time at every step of accounts payable.

From the time that a vendor sends you an invoice, to the time you send your payment, there are numerous ways to save valuable time. Here are some simple tips to save time throughout your accounts payable process:

Eliminate redundancies by centralizing your invoice processing

If you're trying to save time, there's nothing worse than paying the same invoice twice. Not only was time wasted while processing the redundant payment, but now you must also dedicate even more time to re-balance your books and reconcile with your vendor to set up a credit.

Especially for companies that have invoice processing happening in multiple locations, it's easy to fall victim to this type of mistake. For this reason, dedicating one central location to process and pay every invoice can drastically reduce the number of times [this costly mistake happens](#), and save you a lot of time.



If you're trying to save time, there's nothing worse than paying the same invoice twice.

Simplify the process by establishing a routine and training employees

There are [a lot of variables](#) that go into every vendor payment. Some of this variety is unavoidable, but some of it is not. While the departments responsible for the invoice and the way that the vendor delivers it can be constantly changing, the way in which your team manages the process of capturing, approving, and making the payment is something that you can keep constant.

Planning ahead for how to handle each of the different types of invoices you receive can help save a lot of time. Establish consistent processes, train all employees to follow it, and then stick to that process every time an invoice is received. This will simplify your accounts payable, and enable both you and your entire company to become even more efficient through repetition of a familiar process.

Minimize errors by capturing invoices in small doses

The more time you spend performing manual data entry, the more prone to mistakes you become over time. As vendor invoices trickle in, it is tempting to put off the process of capturing them to a future point in time that you can knock them all out in fell swoop. However, this practice will increase both the number of mistakes and [resources required for reconciling](#) them.

Capturing your invoices in smaller doses, or even individually, will limit errors and the amount of time you spend correcting mistakes.

Automate the entire invoice-to-pay process

Investing in an [accounts payable automation solution](#) has saved companies [as much as 64 hours each month](#). However, a key to maximizing your investment

in automation is choosing a solution that automates the entire invoice-to-pay process, and not just an individual component within that process.

[MineralTree Invoice-to-Pay](#) builds all of the best practices discussed above into your accounts payable process by integrating with your corporate bank account and common accounting systems, such as [NetSuite](#), [QuickBooks](#), [Microsoft Dynamics GP](#), [Sage Intacct](#), and [Xero](#).



Curious to see what your accounts payable process would look like with automation?



CONTACT MINERALTREE

for a complimentary assessment of your projected savings with AP Automation

THE LIFE OF AN INVOICE



Regardless of size, industry or location, every company receives invoices and makes vendor payments. However, when you are processing invoices and paying bills manually, the time and cost add up. The strain on operational resources and your team can be substantial. And the majority of this strain is derived from the invoice processing alone.

With accounts payable automation, many of the areas of inefficiency that crop up throughout the life of an invoice are all but eliminated. In fact, automating the approval, routing and reconciliation is proven to reduce the cost of this process up to 50%. This takes into account the hard and soft costs associated with AP.

In this infographic, we follow an invoice from the time your company receives it all the way through to the bill being paid.

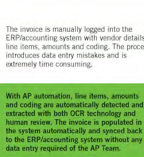
STEP 1: THE INVOICE IS RECEIVED



You receive the invoice by mail, fax, email or vendor portal. The process requires someone to check the file machine, open mail, check vendor portals or email.

With AP automation, invoices go directly into a central solution, limiting human intervention.

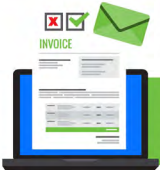
STEP 2: INVOICE ENTRY LOGGED IN ERP



The invoice is manually logged into the ERP/accounting system with vendor details, line items, amounts and coding. The process introduces data entry mistakes and is extremely time consuming.

With AP automation, line items, amounts and coding are automatically detected and extracted with both OCR technology and human review. The invoice is populated in the system automatically and synced back to the ERP/accounting system without any data entry required of the AP team.

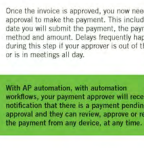
STEP 3: THE INVOICE IS ROUTED FOR APPROVAL



Typically, the invoice needs to get approval before it is logged in the system of record. AP Teams often request invoice approval via paper-based processes or via email or online chat messaging tools. This approval process is ad hoc, inconsistent and unreliable.

With AP automation, once the system has automatically captured the invoice, your workflow sends an approval request with the invoice attached as a reference. Approvals are predefined based on vendor or invoice amount and your system knows who to send it to. Approvals can access via mobile phone, tablet or their computer.

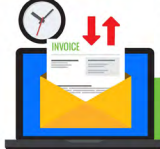
STEP 4: THE PAYMENT IS ROUTED FOR APPROVAL



Once the invoice is approved, you now need to gain approval to make the payment. This includes the date you will submit the payment, the payment method and amount. Delays frequently happen during this step if your approver is out of the office or is in meetings all day.

With AP automation, with automation workflows, your payment approver will receive notification that there is a payment pending approval and they can review, approve or reject the payment from any device, at any time.

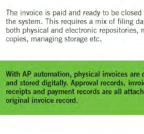
STEP 5: THE PAYMENT IS SCHEDULED AND EXECUTED



After payment approval (if it occurs), the invoice is paid and remittance details are sent to the vendor. Printing and mailing checks, initiating ACH with the bank or completing credit card payments is time consuming and difficult to reconcile afterwards.

With AP automation, upon approval, the payment will go out immediately on a scheduled date. No further action is required. Two-way sync checks your invoice in your ERP completing the process.

STEP 6: INVOICE PAID AND ARCHIVED FOR FUTURE RECONCILIATION



The invoice is paid and ready to be closed out in the system. This requires a mix of filing data in both physical and electronic repositories, making copies, managing storage etc.

With AP automation, physical invoices are captured and stored digitally. Approval records, invoice copies, receipts and payment records are all attached to the original invoice record.

When looking for a way to streamline AP processes, automation can help limit errors, reduce required man hours and lead to faster payments. Companies in search of an industry leading AP automation solution need to look no further.

VISIT MINERALTREE.COM TO LEARN MORE



THE LIFE OF AN INVOICE

INFOGRAPHIC

WE RECENTLY PUBLISHED A NEW INFOGRAPHIC THAT HIGHLIGHTS HOW THE COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH MANAGING INVOICES ARE MUCH HIGHER THAN YOU WOULD EXPECT. WE FOLLOW THE JOURNEY OF AN INVOICE IN THIS INFOGRAPHIC.



[VIEW INFOGRAPHIC](#)

ARE YOU A STEWARD CFO?

BEING A CFO TODAY
MEANS SOMETHING
VERY DIFFERENT THAN
IT USED TO.

** THIS ARTICLE IS PART 1 OF A 5-PART SERIES
FOCUSED ON BECOMING A FULL STACK CFO.*

Running an organization with maximum efficiency as disruptive tech constantly hits the market is no simple task. It requires the diverse skill set of a Steward CFO. Here is a rundown of the different priorities and responsibilities of a Steward CFO today:



Are you investing in profitable growth in order to return capital to shareholders?

As the lead capital manager in the organization, it is your job to know the inner workings of your organization, and take a strategic approach to investing in profitable initiatives, tools, and personnel.

With [new technology disrupting the way businesses operate](#) on a near-daily basis, Steward CFOs must keep their ear to the ground, and their mind open to rapid change. Keeping up to date with the latest developments in tech is essential.



Are you giving investors a transparent view into your organization's financial health?

While guiding the company through sound capital management, a Steward CFO must simultaneously deliver complete financial reporting on everything the organization is doing.

Today, this goes beyond personal discipline on the part of the CFO, and requires the leadership to instill a culture of diligence and complete reporting throughout the company.



Are you protecting your company's assets and employees by promoting a culture that follows the rules?

Compliance traditionally falls on the shoulders of an organization's controller. However, the Steward CFO makes it as easy as possible for their controller. Mapping out all of the key functions of the business, and building detailed protocols that are easy to follow, empowers controllers to stay on top of compliance at all times.

Earning a COSO Certificate can help you identify, analyze, and respond to compliance issues with proficiency.



DOWNLOAD WHITEPAPER
to learn about the other roles that define a Full Stack CFO.



PAPER IS OUT

ELECTRONIC

IS IN

TRACKING THE RISE OF PAPERLESS

WHETHER IT'S ON A WEEKLY, BI-WEEKLY OR MONTHLY BASIS, AP PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN TASKED WITH ENSURING ALL INCOMING AND OUTGOING INVOICES ARE PROCESSED QUICKLY, EFFICIENTLY AND ACCURATELY. HISTORICALLY, THE MENIAL LABOR ASPECT OF THIS PROCESS HAS BEEN UNAVOIDABLE: INVOICES ARE ISSUED ON PAPER, MAILED OR FAXED, DATA IS ENTERED AND TABULATED BY HAND, AND FOLLOWING PAYMENT, THE INVOICE IS THEN FILED.

We don't have to belabor how operationally exhausting this process is, but for decades it was very much the norm. But things have changed: Thanks in part to [AP automation](#) opportunities, the paperless wave is taking hold, not just in the accounting and invoice space, but also in actually saving space when storage availability is scarce. Here's a brief history on how the paperless invoicing trend got its start and why it doesn't look like it will be ending anytime soon.

'The Office Of The Future'

Though it's difficult to pinpoint the precise launching point for what would become the paperless era, the movement gained a foothold in 1975, in an article titled "The Office of the Future" in the publication BusinessWeek.

George Pake, who at the time was the point person for the Xerox Corporation Research Center, told the magazine he had full confidence the rise of automation would turn traditional business on its head.

"There is absolutely no question that there will be a revolution in the office over the next 20 years," Pake predicted. "What we are doing will change the office like the jet plane revolutionized travel and the way that TV has altered family life."

By all accounts, this prediction has come true: Offices that were previously tethered to hard-copy invoicing, as well as other paper-based operations and processes, have seen the steady adoption of technology that renders paper unnecessary. While obviously this prediction had a utopian ring to it, the truth is that the underlying driver of technological adoption has always been about maximizing efficiency and profitability for businesses. Ink and paper are not unsubstantial line items in operating budgets for many businesses, so cutting these out can lead to serious savings.

Companies are analyzing all their workflow processes to see if paperless makes sense.

Companies around the world have gone down this paperless path: Around 10 percent of companies in 2014 [made concerted efforts to go as paperless as possible](#), examining every form of documentation used, according to survey data compiled by the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM). By 2015, though, the share jumped to 16 percent and all data suggests this will continue to climb at times goes by.

The paperless isn't the future – it's already here.



Reducing The Footprint

The same logic holds true for minimizing the need for a physical archive of filed invoices, with filing cabinets that can end up occupying an uncomfortable amount of an office's total footprint. As Christina Jones, founder of the Equine Business Association, said to the Telegraph, this helps mitigate the limitations of a smaller office – or even an entirely remote workforce.

“We've transitioned to a 100 percent virtual team, so having paperwork in office filing cabinets was no longer accessible,” Jones told the Telegraph. “I also wanted more freedom to work from different locations, and to reduce admin costs, particularly with accounts and bookkeeping.”

Rummaging through filing cabinets slows work processes down. Indeed, document searches can account for [nearly a third of workers' time](#), according to a study conducted by the ILM Corporation. What's more, the typical employee devotes more time to searching for documents than they do to reading them, averaging 60 minutes versus 20 minutes, respectively.

Digital Invoices Saving Money, Time

Business AP has seen the most dramatic benefit from this technological shift. The ability to issue, process, authorize and archive invoices digitally has a much more direct impact on a company's bottom line than simply reducing the paper cost line items in budgets. Simply put: It helps companies pay vendors faster, creating a true operating budget and removing the burden of delayed payments. This may explain why an estimated 40 percent of companies deliver at least 50 percent of their invoices in a digital format, according to AIIM.

Jim Secord, CEO for an accounting startup based in Canada, told Inc. magazine that AP automation [makes everything easier and faster](#), from start to finish.



But this isn't just a benefit for the accounts receivable department: The reduction of the paper trail not only expedites payments but creates a true operating budget, allowing AP to schedule payments in a smarter, more sophisticated way, making better use of constrained resources. Add to this digital tagging making pulling completed invoices from the archives a far faster process, and you have a significant improvement to paper-based AP.

For companies that haven't jumped aboard the AP automation bandwagon, leaving paper in the rearview mirror, there's no time like today to make the switch. A sophisticated automated AP solution like [MineralTree](#) has the tools to make the transition smooth, allowing for greater efficiency and visibility into payments and invoicing – all without having to search through stacks of paper.

THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE INVOICES

“THEY DON’T MAKE THEM QUITE LIKE THEY USED TO.” WHILE THIS ROSE-COLORED TAKE ON NOSTALGIA MAY BE TRUE OF CERTAIN PRODUCTS OR SERVICES, ACCOUNTS PAYABLE INVOICES CERTAINLY AREN’T ONE OF THEM. THE AP PROCESS HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN LABOR-INTENSIVE, TIME-SENSITIVE AND RIFE WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE MANUAL ENTRY ERRORS.

Automation has created a smoother and smarter workflow, and, in turn, driven widespread adoption. Data suggests that nearly 65 percent of companies who have not yet adopted [AP automation](#) are planning to do so within two years.

Here are some of the ways digital has transformed AP for the better, transforming the thorny and labyrinthine into smooth and hassle-free.

26% of AP managers say lost invoices frustrate them the most.

1. No More Misplaced Accounts Payable Invoices

In the world of accounts payable, efficiency is the ultimate aim. Under manual AP – which, in spite of automation on the upswing, remains in place – orderliness and timeliness are rarities due, in part, to the sheer volume of invoices and what might best be described as “location frustration.” Indeed, in a 2016 study conducted by Aberdeen, more than a quarter of respondents – 26 percent – cited [misplacing paper-based invoices](#) as their chief stressor.



Participants in a separate poll pointed to similar perturbations. Nearly 10 percent of respondents in an iPayables survey [said missing or lost invoices](#) was their biggest vexation.

Lost invoices can lead to excessive penalty fees, stemming from companies missing their payment deadlines. For AP managers specifically, the disorganization that is endemic in manual AP processes can spawn other issues that affect business and customers relationships. When the occasional late payment becomes habitual, vendors may come to expect problems before they even happen, which can strain otherwise harmonious partnerships and result in reputational damage.

2. Importing Digital Invoices More Easily Than Manual Data Capture

A key development in the evolution of AP automation has been the shift from technological solutions built around accommodating the traditional paper invoicing to technologies that are more forward looking.

With most invoices being delivered in a hard copy format, automation solutions integrated optical character recognition (OCR) tools, “reading” information and capturing the data. While still a hands-off process – one that significantly reduces manual entry errors – OCR still has some room for improvement, as inconsistencies in formatting, invoice complexity, type and other physical artifacts can require manual intervention and data entry clean-up.

All this, however, is changing as electronic invoices enter the fray: Rather than capturing data physically written down, electronic invoices have the potential to simply import and parse this data directly into an automated AP solution. Without the need to essentially translate physical information into digital, manual intervention and data entry is even less of a

need. This is a particular boon to companies dealing with international vendors and [making cross-border payments](#), as potential language barriers can be easily circumvented and the raw data parsed automatically, regardless of the original language of the invoice.

3. Increased Employee Satisfaction

Automation has helped resolve these performance issues, and Americans – by and large – welcome the transition. In a recent poll conducted by the Pew Research Center nearly two-thirds of college graduates said automation [made their work more interesting](#) and 53 percent indicated it created more opportunities for career advancement.

The advantages are quite clear in the AP performance space. Based on a study conducted by benchmarking and adviser company APQC, there’s a wide disparity in how much money it costs businesses just to process invoices. For example, among some businesses, [the average spent was \\$12.44 per invoice](#), CFO Edge reported. However, for companies with better systems in place, their per-invoice average spend was \$4.98.

Why the stark difference? Manual versus automated. Industries that used manual accounts payable invoice processing, APQC found, typically paid more in labor expenses. The accuracy and intelligence automation is known for, meanwhile, helped reduce companies’ operating and processing expenses.

This is deeply relevant to AP managers because it’s an indication of the automation direction companies are gravitating toward, rejiggering labor processes to squeeze every last drop out from hired help, technological or people-based.

Accounts payable is a job function found in every industry. Thanks to automation, the payment process has never been simpler or faster, making the transition from manual a *fait accompli* for businesses looking to streamline.



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