



AP Automation Implementation Checklist



Implementing AP automation that delivers real results

AP automation isn't just about software. It's about strategy, process, and execution. Use this checklist to build a strong foundation, avoid common pitfalls, and drive measurable ROI.



1. Assign an internal champion

Every successful implementation has a dedicated owner.

- Assign a single accountable owner (not a group or shared inbox)
- Define responsibility for adoption, optimization, and performance tracking
- Align ownership to CFO priorities (cash flow, risk, controls, ROI)
- Empower the champion to make process decisions and enforce change



2. Start with a payments first strategy

Payments should shape your AP automation, not be added as an afterthought.

- Document current payment methods (ACH, wires, cards, checks)
- Segment vendors by preferred and optimal payment method
- Identify inefficiencies (check runs, delays, errors, missed rebates)
- Confirm payments strategy will guide invoice workflow design
- Define goals (reduce checks, improve timing, optimize cash flow)
- Align payment approach with working capital and revenue goals



3. Audit and simplify current processes

Don't automate inefficiencies, eliminate them.

- Map your full invoice-to-pay workflow
- Eliminate out of system workflows (spreadsheets, email tracking, side systems)
- Identify bottlenecks (approvals, exceptions, manual touchpoints)
- Document where manual rework or exception handling occurs
- Remove redundant or outdated approval layers



4. Ensure ERP and integration readiness

Integration isn't a detail, it's critical to scale.

- Confirm seamless integration with your ERP
- Ensure reporting matches across systems
- Validate reliable 2-way sync for invoices, payments, and vendor data
- Eliminate manual reconciliation workarounds



5. Simplify and modernize approval workflows

Payments should shape your AP automation, not be added as an afterthought.

- Define approval thresholds based on invoice value
- Route invoices automatically by role, department, or exception
- Reduce unnecessary approvers and touchpoints
- Enable exception based workflows instead of full manual review
- Ensure full visibility, audit trails, and compliance



6. Optimize your payment mix

Make smarter payment decisions to lower costs, strengthen control, and drive more value.

- Reduce reliance on paper checks
- Enable ACH, wires, and virtual cards where appropriate
- Implement automated payment routing by vendor and transaction type
- Align payment methods to cost, risk, and vendor preference
- Track and maximize rebate opportunities (e.g., virtual cards)
- Monitor payment performance and continuously optimize



7. Plan for vendor adoption and payment enablement

Automation only works if vendors are enabled to support it.

- Identify vendors eligible for digital payments
- Prioritize vendors with the highest payment volume or cost impact
- Ensure vendors receive detailed, accurate remittance data with every payment
- Use your provider's vendor network and payment services to accelerate enrollment
- Continuously expand digital payment adoption to reduce checks and increase efficiency
- Confirm how payment services will support ongoing optimization and reduce internal workload



8. Identify early wins and build momentum

Start small to drive adoption and prove value quickly.

- Prioritize high-impact areas (e.g., reducing checks, faster payments)
- Set short-term, measurable goals for initial rollout
- Track early improvements in efficiency and cycle time
- Share wins internally to build confidence and buy-in
- Use momentum to expand automation across AP workflows



9. Measure performance and use AP data strategically

Track results and use insights to drive better decisions.

- Baseline performance before implementation
- Measure cost of payments, especially checks
- Track rebates, discounts, and revenue generated from payments
- Use AP data to identify cash flow trends, risks, and missed opportunities



Final check: Are you set up for success?

Before going live, you should confirm:

- Payments strategy is clearly defined and drives your approach
- Processes are optimized, not just automated
- Integration is reliable and fully tested
- Internal ownership and accountability are established
- Metrics are in place to measure and prove success
- Solution and processes can scale with volume, entities, and vendor growth

Want the full framework for a successful AP automation implementation?

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