

American Plant Food Streamlines AP Management and Boosts Supplier Relations

iDocuments



Fertilizer supplier uses iDocuments to automate procure-to-pay in SAP Business One



ABOUT

Based in Galena Park, American Plant Food (APF) has been providing the high-quality blends, inputs, and services required for healthy soil, as well as the knowledge growers need to achieve lasting results since 1964. The company knows that nutrient-rich soil is essential for collecting healthy returns every season, now and for generations to come. That's why it focuses on delivering superior soil health products and helping growers better understand what's beneath their feet. APF leverages its fertilizer experience into agronomic expertise while streamlining distribution.
www.americanplantfood.com



The need to control and speed AP processes

American Plant Food (APF) serves a large number of food growers with its high-quality fertilizer products which it sells in massive quantities. A typical purchase order calls for APF to deliver a single shipment as 25 tons or enough to fill a 100-ton rail car, even enough for a 1,500-ton barge. To create its products in such high quantities, APF relies on its own suppliers to ensure the company always has on hand the necessary inputs to deliver the ideal blends to its own customers. This requires a high volume of purchase orders and robust accounts payable (AP) management.

Following a successful implementation of SAP Business One, APF decided to add an AP-focused software solution to better manage its large volume of monthly AP invoices. The company's existing process relied mostly on email communications and paper-based sharing within the Finance department. It was slowing the business and jeopardizing supplier relations.

"Not only were we wasting money and time using paper, our approval process was a mess with printouts floating all around the office," said Clay Waggoner, APF's Controller. Additionally, the lack of real-time invoice management meant that the Finance team processed invoices in a single weekly batch run, leaving Waggoner to face a stack of invoices needing his signature every Friday. After he would sign each invoice, the team's only AP processor had to manually enter its information into Business One.

With just one AP processor, Waggoner's team felt the crush from the volume of invoices coming through, sometimes losing track of invoices. "We'd lose invoices sometimes and need to explain to vendors that we still liked them and had plenty of money to pay. Then, it would be a fire drill to find the invoice and pay it fast."



Beyond the AP invoice issues, APF was also struggling to manage expense reporting and purchase orders. Employees were frustrated by the time and effort required to complete expense reports and would often wait months before submitting expense reports. As time passed, receipts would no longer be submitted to obtain reimbursement for related expenses. As for purchase orders, the process to manage and approve them was mostly manual. "In both cases, we were forcing people to waste valuable time doing things that should have been automated," said Waggoner.

The ideal AP and expense management add-on to SAP B1

American Plant Food evaluated several AP solutions which they could easily integrate to SAP Business One. While they all had strong invoice management capabilities, only iDocuments provided automated expense reporting and management as well as automated procure-to-pay workflows that included full purchase order management. "Frankly, we selected iDocuments, because it is the only solution with all the AP features we need. Plus, Vision33 provides a pre-built integration to Business One," explained Waggoner.



"iDocuments has definitely sped things up, and our AP person no longer wastes time on processes that are now fully automated."



Streamlined and accurate AP processing

After implementing the iDocuments solution and its integration to SAP Business One, APF suddenly has a rapid, automated and seamless invoice payments process in place. They save time at the outset, as the system eliminates the need for manual data entry. iDocuments reads an invoice and knows where to find the critical fields of information. It then sends the invoice to the first approver. Once that approver clicks 'Approved', the invoice automatically shows up on the screen of the next-level approver in the workflow. "Not only does it all happen automatically, we can easily see who is holding up an invoice instead of hunting around for it," said Waggoner.

"iDocuments also reduces the Controller's personal stress level by launching the workflow in real time when an invoice arrives via email. Rather than face a massive weekly batch, he can spread his approval effort throughout the week, at his convenience. "We also pay priority invoices faster. If an invoice arrives on Monday, it's not waiting until Friday to show up on my desk," Waggoner added.

Faster purchase approval of compliant purchase orders

Using iDocuments, APF has dramatically reduced order errors and completely eliminated rogue purchase orders. iDocuments enabled Waggoner to establish a PO approval workflow that forces compliance with a 3-way match before a PO can be issued. "It's an area we used to have to monitor closely and manually," explained Waggoner. "iDocuments has definitely sped things up, and our AP person no longer wastes time on processes that are now fully automated."



"One person clicks approve...and boom. it's on the next person's screen and ready for approval."

iDocuments

Expense reporting that pays to use

Today, 30 APF employees routinely submit their expense reports—on time and 100% accurately – using iDocuments. Gone are the days when they would hesitate to submit them because of the arduous, manual work involved. Now, they quickly upload their receipts and recover funds much faster, while the company can reconcile expenses faster. “I hear nothing but positive feedback from the users submitting the expense reports to our AP processor,” said Waggoner. He also notes that the expense reporting workflows help them avoid the same old situation of searching around the office for paper-based reports and approvals.



“Nothing falls through the cracks with iDocuments, and employee morale has risen as a result.”

Cascading benefits delivered by automated procure-to-pay

APF has realized significant benefits from their integration of iDocuments into SAP Business One. All legitimate purchase orders and invoices are approved quickly, greatly improving the company’s relationships with its suppliers. Internally, Waggoner says that the prime beneficiary of iDocuments within his organization is the AP clerk, as she has gained significant time savings. Now that iDocuments handles all the tedious tasks, she can focus entirely on critical items that have the greatest impact on the business.

The benefits of iDocuments are also spreading throughout the company – from the receptionist who once had to print out everything and scan those documents back into electronic form, to the buyers who need supplies fast. “Nothing falls through the cracks with iDocuments, and employee morale has risen as a result,” said a happy Waggoner.





Vision33 (www.vision33.com) helps growing companies deliver on the promise of technology through enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions, including SAP Business One and Sage Intacct, automation, and integration solutions. Vision33 has the people, processes, and technology to help businesses solve everyday challenges and seize new opportunities for growth and transformation. With proprietary solutions such as iDocuments and Saltbox, Vision33 helps businesses leverage the right transformative technology for their digital transformation journeys.

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