



Stadtwerke Düsseldorf AG

EMC SAP Consulting automates the processing and approval of network interchange and usage invoices

Benefits

- Automated workflow management of all incoming invoices from network suppliers
- Simpler and faster processing and approval of invoices
- Easier to locate and access original invoices in the archiving system
- Improved auditing compliance
- Prevents incorrect account assignments and late payment charges
- Removes reliance on handwritten accounting documents
- Reduces manual intervention and the risk of errors

Business overview

Stadtwerke Düsseldorf AG has been providing energy to Düsseldorf, Germany, and its surrounding regions for more than 130 years. It provides its customers with electricity, water, gas, and community heating, as well as environmental and waste disposal services. With an annual turnover of €800 million, Stadtwerke Düsseldorf is among the ten largest German public utility companies.

Challenges

Stadtwerke Düsseldorf AG has positioned itself in the deregulated energy market extremely well and successfully acquired new customers from outside of its traditional geographic market area. However, this growth in the company's customer base has led to a dramatic and ongoing increase in the number of network interchange and network usage invoices. These invoices, which are sent to Stadtwerke Düsseldorf AG by the relevant network operator, are generally paper-based and require manual registration and processing, which are very labor intensive.

As a result, Stadtwerke Düsseldorf wanted to implement a solution that could be integrated with its existing IT infrastructure in order to:

- Automate the processing and approval of invoices for supplier network usage
- Minimize the manual effort needed to edit those invoices within the company's accounting department

Business profile

Stadtwerke Düsseldorf AG

National energy supplier and one of the top ten largest public utility companies in Germany

Industry

Utilities

Geographies

Düsseldorf, Germany

Business solution

AP/AR processing/invoicing

EMC Documentum products

EMC Documentum content management platform, EMC Captiva InputAccel

EMC partners

SAP AG

EMC SAP Consulting solution

Before the solution was implemented, EMC® SAP® Consulting (formerly dolphin Organisationsberatung und IT-Projekte GmbH) helped Stadtwerke Düsseldorf to develop the project requirements and system specification. The project, which was called “automated invoice processing and early scanning of utility supplier invoices,” covered the following key processes:

- Scanning of invoices and down payment requests
- Automating the capture and recognition of the defined data and attributes from the document
- Automating the invoice approval by synchronizing the captured data with the company’s existing MerkurV (an external database used to administer contracts for customers outside the traditional market area) and SAP R/3® systems, as well as identification of the booking account
- Automating the invoice and booking of down payment requests, as well as down payment clearance in SAP R/3, based on the capture and synchronization of relevant data
- Automating the document flow of the scanned invoice and supporting documents between the SAP R/3 system and the archiving facility in the EMC Documentum® content management repository

The system also had to provide sufficient scalability and flexibility to manage any other documents coming into Stadtwerke Düsseldorf.

Imaging and recognition

Incoming mail is sorted into broad categories in the mailing room and all invoices from network suppliers are scanned and imaged with Captiva® InputAccel®. The Océ system recognizes the type of invoice, such as whether it is a monthly or annual invoice, or a credit note or advanced payment. Optical character recognition and intelligent character recognition (OCR/ICR) enables the system to identify and interpret characteristics agreed to by the industry regulator and coordinated by the energy suppliers, regardless of the invoice’s layout. Key attributes include agreement number, device, due date, accounting period, consumption quantity or unit, energy charge, basic price, address, net and gross invoice values, sales tax, down payments made, and up to twenty additional attributes.

Forwarding and archiving

The scanned original invoice and its recognized attributes are then sent to be archived in the EMC Documentum® content management repository. Documentum saves the original invoice in an auditable environment and processes about thirty recognized attributes. Documentum also “knows” the status of every supplier invoice, such as if an invoice is booked.

If invoices are scanned incorrectly, are unreadable, or if the user cannot recognize the type of invoice while scanning, there is a workstation for handling errors. This process incorporates the ability to relocate invoices manually, so that the document and any recognized attributes will not be lost.

One of the main reasons that Documentum was chosen as the integration platform for this solution was its ability to be seamlessly integrated with SAP R/3, using EMC Documentum Content Services for SAP. The scanned original invoice is linked automatically with the relevant SAP information, so that it can be displayed instantly and without any manual intervention.

Validation check

Once the attributes reach SAP R/3 via SAP Business Workflow there is a validation check, which is coordinated either within SAP R/3 or through an external system, depending on customer requirements. If the checking process is successful, then the recognized attributes of the supplier's invoice are forwarded automatically to be incorporated into the SAP R/3 system. If the checking process is unsuccessful, a workflow process is activated that forwards the invoice on for further verification. These invoices are then checked or corrected, before being booked into SAP R/3, and forwarded for settlement in the usual way.

“Since the solution went live, the time needed for invoice processing and approval by accounting has been reduced by about 80 percent. Previously it took about seven minutes for an invoice to go through that business process; now it needs only 1.5 minutes to be fully completed. Also, implementation time for the project was less than one year.”

Detlef Frankreiter, Vice Head of the Administrative Accounting Department

Summary

According to Detlef Frankreiter, vice head of the administrative accounting department at Stadtwerke Düsseldorf, “Since the solution went live, the time needed for invoice processing and approval by accounting has been reduced by about 80 percent. Previously it took about seven minutes for an invoice to go through that business process; now, it needs only 1.5 minutes to be fully completed. Also, implementation time for the project was less than one year.”

Future prospects

Holger Sueße, group leader SAP and DMS, at information service in Stadtwerke Düsseldorf, states, “Because this project was such a success we decided to start another project with EMC SAP Consulting called, “Intelligent Incoming Post Processing.” This solution automates the processing of all distribution and customer management documents. It went live together with SAP/IS-U on March 1, 2004.”

EMC SAP Consulting

EMC SAP Consulting's focus is classic SAP consulting, and the implementation of SAP add-on functionality like optimization of existing business processes with scanning and OCR products, document management solutions, archiving solutions, workflow management, and portal integrations.

To learn more, contact your local EMC sales representative or authorized value-added reseller—call us directly at **1-866-464-7381**, or visit our website at **www.EMC.com/sap**

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Customer Profile
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