



eFLOW

One platform. Multiple choices.

Multi Channel Invoice Processing
- *the way forward* -

A Guide

A Guide to: Multi Channel Invoice Processing

Money makes the world go round, or so they say. For many in the AP department they would say that in fact *invoices* make the world go round.

Thousands of invoices are received by organisations every month. Paper is still going strong, with around 28.5 billion paper invoices sent each year in Western Europe. And despite promises to the contrary, the advent of different media channels bringing e-invoices, EDI, pdf's, mobile capture and so on has actually further complicated the AP department's role.

In short, processing invoices:

- is time consuming
- is costly
- can cause delays in payments
- can lead to penalties and sanctions

But you know all this already. You also know that AP automation has been around for more than a decade and that too has now become confused. 'Do I need a solution for paper invoices and a solution for e-invoices, and how much will that cost for two solutions?' is often what we hear, and for many outside of the largest organisations, neither has been a viable option.

The good news is that the technology has progressed and is now more simple and easy to implement and it's known as multi channel invoice automation.

Once upon a time...

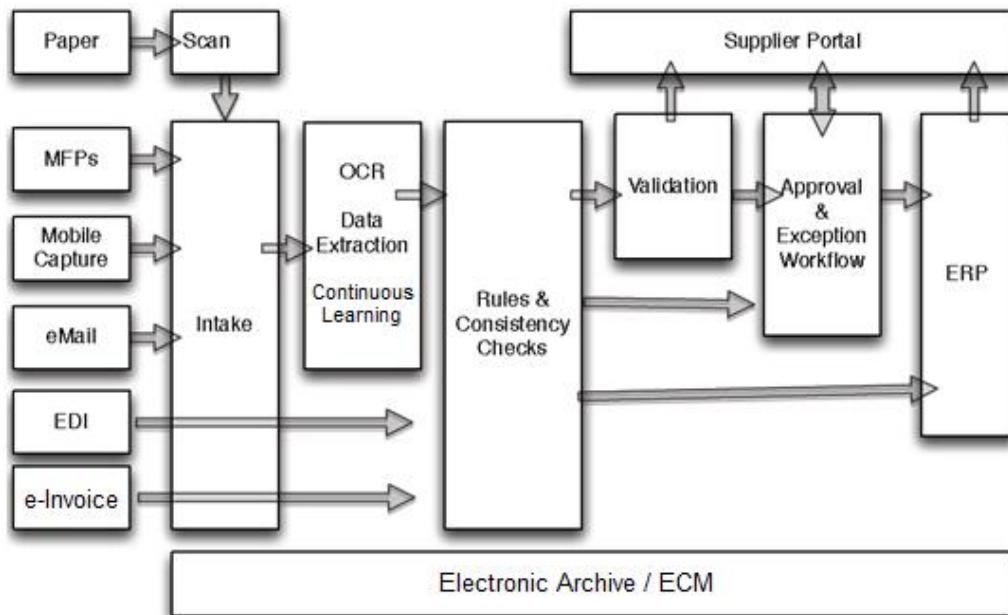
Invoice automation used to be a replacement to manually keying in invoice data from paper invoices. Now invoices come in from multiple channels and you need a solution that can deal effectively with all sources of data. What we call 'multi channel invoice processing'; a single solution that captures data at the point of entry to the organisation whatever the original format of the invoice (paper, EDI, e-invoice, or pdf). *eFLOW* Invoice uses 'single platform' technology which means it uses a range of technologies in a single solution in order to process the invoices across the organisation whatever the source or the format – a truly multi channel solution.

Captured data is validated and fed directly to the ERP system(s) that you already use.

Using multi channel invoice processing, AP staff deal only with exceptions or problem invoices in a single solution. How many times do you hear of EDI data validation failures days after the event, 'Why didn't we reject this data immediately after it was received?' is often what we hear. For the first time AP staff have clear visibility of the complete end to end accounts process. You can see what stage each invoice is, no matter how it was delivered: paper, pdf or e-invoice. You can view your liabilities at any point, where invoices are being held up for validation or authorisation, if you are on target for upcoming payment dates and so on. With invoice automation, power is placed firmly back within the AP department who can ensure efficient, legally compliant processing and payments, whilst at the same time whose personnel can cut processing costs.

What is Multi Channel invoice processing?

A Multi Channel invoice processing schematic.



Multi channel invoice processing means being able to accept and process in the same way all invoice types in all formats, and here's what to look out for:

Paper Documents

Intelligent Data Capture (IDC) for paper-based invoices is a key part of the multi channel process. It is vital that the data extraction engine can be deployed quickly without the need to create templates or learning scripts for suppliers, as this is almost impossible to manage if you have 20,000 vendors for example.

PDF Processing

New technology has come to invoice processing that will read an invoice .pdf file 100% of the time with no errors. Clients find that converting suppliers to 'print' to pdf is readily accepted, it actually lowers the suppliers' cost, is 'greener' and because it will also email a receipt and a tracking number back to the supplier, it is a much more secure solution, with no more paper invoices disappearing in the post. More information can be found at www.pdf.co.uk PDFR technology uses the underlying machine-readable data within a pdf file and it is as reliable as an e-invoice.

Flexible e-invoice Processing

Flexible e-invoicing i.e. XML or EDI submissions should be accepted in multiple formats that suppliers are readily able to supply without cost, rather than having to conform to the receiver's rigid specification.

Manual Validation

It's important when AP staff make good any data corrections this work isn't wasted. Intuitive Learning that follows the key strokes of the AP staff so that the application learns from the error made in locating the data and automatically applies this knowledge in future.

Improved service for less

Implementing a multi channel invoice automation solution can be a good time to review and streamline your current processes. If you work in regional offices, for example, you might want to centralise the point of entry for all invoices. For some however this is just not practical. The beauty of *eFLOW* Invoice for multi channel processing is that invoices can be processed locally or centrally to suit your business processes.

Capture the benefits of straight through processing

The ultimate aim of automatic invoice processing is 'straight through processing' (STP) where invoices automatically enter an organisation, are matched to data in the ERP system and are paid accordingly, without AP staff ever having to touch them manually. All the while accurate data is available at every step of the process so AP staff can identify any potential problems and have an accurate picture of their liabilities at any given point.

The multi channel advantage

A single platform solution dealing with all invoices from all sources streamlines your processes. Whether an e-invoice, pdf or a paper invoice, data is captured on entry to the organisation and from thereon dealt with in exactly the same way. As legal requirements for auditing and reporting are getting stricter, it is important to have a single internal control system which consolidates audit trails for all document types, formats and activities instead of requiring multiple solutions and audit trails. Further, electronic archiving of all documents whatever the original format is consistent and ensures legal compliance.

In a nutshell to finish with

Multi channel invoice processing brings:

- Full control of all documents from reception to archiving
- Fraud detection
- Collaboration with suppliers for improved exception handling
- Visibility of all important information in real time

And it's all quick and easy to implement. Sounds good, doesn't it?

For further information on *eFLOW* email tis_uk@topimagesystems.com