

Case Study: Transportation & Logistics

RPA Streamlines Processes, Improves Supplier Relations

Bots help a postal services provider speed accounts payable and free resources for higher-value work.

A major Nordic postal services organization turned to Cognizant to help streamline a key aspect of its supplier accounts payable process. The existing system was complicated and time-consuming, yet critical to maintaining good supplier relations and operating as cost-effectively as possible.

Both goals were important to the client as a government organization – and difficult to achieve with a high-volume, very labor-intensive and complex supplier payment reminder process. Each time the operations team received a request for status of payment from a supplier, an analyst had to manually check to see if the request was a new one. If it was a new request, the analyst had to key a new entry in the master database with the supplier name, invoice amount and invoice number. If the supplier was emailing about an existing request, the analyst had to not only update the master database with invoice details, but also take care to mark it as a duplicate request.

Next, the analyst had to check the status of the invoice – such as whether it was paid, in progress, or unpaid – in the organization's SAP application. Then the analyst had to send an email to the supplier with an update, and/or to authorizers for invoice and payment approval.

At a glance

A large postal services provider turned to us to streamline its process for communicating with suppliers about payment status. We designed a robotic process automation (RPA) solution that frees up resources for higher-value work by automating the most labor-intensive steps in the operation.

Outcomes

Running one hour per day, five days a week, bots automatically download vendor ledger details, check for duplicates, update payment status, and prepare daily detailed status reports for internal use. The results to date include:

- 88.89% AHT reduction (from 270 seconds to 30 seconds)
- 100% accuracy
- 80% of cases fully automated
- 37.5% resource optimization

With the postal services provider receiving an average of 25,000 supplier invoice update request emails annually, and an average handling time of 270 seconds per request, the inefficient process was harming productivity. And inaccurate data – such as a single errant keystroke when an analyst entered data – could lead to multiple rounds of supplier communication, consuming yet more time and potentially hurting supplier relations.

Delivering Robotic Process Automation

We drew on our extensive supply chain and logistics management expertise to design a robotic process automation (RPA) solution that substantially automated key aspects of the process. Running one hour per day, five days a week, bots automatically execute the following steps:

- Download vendor ledger report from ERP.
- Match the reminder request data with vendor ledger data.

- Check to see if an invoice is a duplicated request.
- Update the payment status in the master database.
- Email a detailed report of processed/unprocessed invoices at the end.

Bots process 375 transactions per day with 100% accuracy, saving the service provider 1,680 hours annually. Average handling time per request is down to 30 seconds, a reduction of almost 89%. The bots automate 37.5% of the work, and 80% of cases now require no human intervention. The bots also assist with cases that do require analyst attention, identifying and opening outliers to help speed their resolution. Supplier relations are enhanced, while the analysts are freed to take on higher-value, more satisfying work.

At Present

The client is exploring how to automate more of the supplier accounts payable process and how to incorporate knowledge retention into the software bots.

For more information, visit [Cognizant.com/cognizant-digital-operations/intelligent-process-automation](https://www.cognizant.com/cognizant-digital-operations/intelligent-process-automation)

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