

10 Key AP Automation Considerations for Companies with Global Invoice Processing

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Global invoice processing has never been more complex or more costly. As companies expand across borders, accounts payable (AP) teams are under immense pressure to manage growing invoice volumes, navigate ever-changing regulations, and prevent costly errors. Yet, many organizations are still clinging to outdated invoice approval processes that are draining resources and increasing risk.

The financial burden of inefficient invoice processing is staggering. Organizations with little to no automation spend an average of \$8.78 per invoice, compared to just \$1.77 per invoice for those that have embraced automation². Processing a single invoice manually can take 15 minutes or more, consuming valuable staff time that could be redirected to more strategic initiatives.

Delays in invoice approvals, compliance failures and manual processing inefficiencies are no longer just operational headaches — they're business risks. With evolving government mandates, tax laws and multi-currency challenges, the cost of inaction is rising. Companies leveraging intelligent document capture and AI-driven invoice processing experience significant efficiency gains, including faster cycle times and lower error rates³. It's no wonder that more than 60 percent of companies are either using or planning to use SaaS-based AP applications within the next 12 months⁴.

The message is clear: AP automation is a necessity for organizations dealing with global invoice complexity. This white paper will walk you through the key benefits of AP automation, the risks of standing still and 10 key considerations when selecting an AP automation solution.



Manual AP processes were once a tedious, paper-intensive exercise involving dozens of 'touches' per invoice¹.

Common pain points with global invoice processing

Global organizations face significant challenges in invoice processing, including:

- Regulatory complexity.** Different countries enforce unique tax codes, e-invoicing mandates and compliance regulations. Non-compliance can result in fines, legal risks and operational disruptions, making it critical for AP teams to stay up to date with evolving global regulations. Failure to comply can also hinder market expansion, as businesses may face operational restrictions, financial penalties or additional scrutiny when entering new regions.
- Multiple ERP systems.** Many multinational firms operate different enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems across regions, making invoice standardization and approvals difficult. Without seamless integration, AP teams experience delays and errors, reducing efficiency. This fragmentation not only slows down global operations but also limits the ability to scale efficiently, creating bottlenecks that can stifle international growth.
- Diverse business practices.** Invoicing requirements, tax regulations and compliance standards vary significantly across regions, increasing the risk of errors, inefficiencies and compliance challenges. A lack of standardization in invoicing procedures complicates validation, approval workflows and audit readiness. As companies expand into new markets, these inconsistencies can cause significant friction, delaying invoice processing, disrupting cash flow, hindering spend management, and increasing operational and administrative costs.
- Language barriers.** AP teams must process invoices in multiple languages, leading to potential misinterpretations, incorrect data entry and reconciliation challenges. This can slow down the process and increase error rates, causing payment delays and compliance risks. Poor translation or misinterpretation of invoice details can lead to compliance issues, strained supplier relationships and administrative burdens that impede global expansion.
- Tax and currency complexity.** Fluctuating exchange rates and varying VAT or withholding tax regulations complicate global payments. A lack of automation can lead to miscalculations and tax penalties. Inaccurate tax reporting and currency fluctuations can cause financial losses, making it harder for companies to maintain profitability across multiple regions.
- Non-standardized invoice formats.** Different supplier invoice formats create difficulties in data extraction and processing. Automated tools must have intelligent data capture capabilities to handle diverse formats and improve accuracy. Without standardization, companies struggle to achieve scalability, as manual intervention is required to process invoices in multiple formats, increasing overhead. Inconsistent formats also make it harder to enforce compliance policies, leading to discrepancies in reporting and reconciliation.
- Lack of AP visibility.** Many companies lack real-time insights into AP processes, making cash flow forecasting difficult. Delayed visibility into financial obligations can impact budgeting and working capital management. This lack of transparency is often due to fragmented systems, manual data entry and siloed processes that prevent a consolidated view of AP data. Limited visibility can prevent businesses from making informed financial decisions, restricting their ability to invest in new markets or seize growth opportunities.

- **Manual processing costs.** Processing invoices manually is expensive due to the labor-intensive tasks involved, including data entry, verification, approvals and exception handling. Manual processes require significant staff time, increasing payroll expenses and reducing overall efficiency. Additionally, the cost of correcting errors — such as duplicate payments, missed discounts, and compliance penalties — further increases the total cost of manual invoice processing. As businesses scale, these inefficiencies become even more pronounced, leading to unsustainable overhead costs that hinder global expansion.
- **Delayed supplier payments.** Inefficiencies in processing invoices can cause late payments, damaging supplier relationships and resulting in penalties, difficulty forecasting cash flow, more supplier inquiries and missed opportunities to capture early-payment discounts. Unreliable payment practices can make it difficult to build strong supplier networks, potentially limiting access to key markets and resources and disrupting operations.
- **Integration challenges.** Global companies often rely on a mix of legacy systems, region-specific ERPs and third-party payment processors, all of which may use different data formats, workflows and security protocols. Without strong integration, AP teams may struggle with delayed approvals, duplicate data entry and inconsistencies in reporting. The lack of interoperability also makes it challenging to maintain compliance with country-specific tax regulations, e-invoicing mandates and currency exchange rules. Companies that fail to achieve system interoperability may experience bottlenecks that slow down expansion efforts, limiting their ability to scale efficiently. Inconsistent data across systems can also impact supplier relationships, increase the risk of fraud and complicate financial audits.

By addressing these challenges through automation, businesses can streamline AP operations, reduce tax and compliance risks, and position themselves for efficient and sustainable global growth.

Tailored AP automation solutions for global invoice processing

Global organizations face unique challenges in automating AP processes, from managing high invoice volumes and diverse supplier networks to ensuring compliance with country-specific regulations. A one-size-fits-all approach to invoice processing automation rarely works — companies need tailored AP automation solutions that scale and adapt to their specific needs.



The most effective AP automation solutions meet organizations where they are — accommodating their invoice volume, supplier diversity, workflows and system integrations.

Why standard P2P systems fall short for AP automation

While procure-to-pay (P2P) platforms support procurement and spend management, they often fail to address the full scope of global invoice processing. Many organizations struggle with:

- **Invoice ingestion and data capture.** Invoices arrive in various formats, from PDFs and paper to EDI and email. Without intelligent data capture, manual intervention is inevitable.
- **Non-PO invoice handling.** P2P systems are built around purchase orders, leaving gaps in handling non-PO invoices, which often requires custom workflows and exception handling.
- **Supplier participation.** Rigid portal requirements and limited invoice submission options deter supplier engagement, leading to delays, inefficiencies and supplier frustration.
- **Complex approval workflows.** Global companies require configurable workflows that accommodate multiple approvers, invoice thresholds and regulatory requirements.
- **ERP and business system integrations.** Many P2P solutions lack the flexibility to integrate seamlessly with multiple ERPs and financial systems, creating data silos and visibility gaps.

The power of a tailored AP automation approach

A tailored AP automation solution aligns with an organization's specific global invoice processing needs, ensuring scalability, flexibility and compliance. Here's how:

- **Scalability for global operations.** Adapts to any invoice volume, from thousands to tens of thousands of invoices per month, supporting companies as they grow.
- **Multi-channel invoice ingestion.** Captures invoices from any source — email, EDI, supplier portals and paper — without forcing suppliers to change their submission methods.
- **Customizable processing thresholds.** Supports straight-through processing (STP) for matched invoices while flagging exceptions or invoices that require approval.
- **Advanced workflow automation.** Configurable workflows ensure invoices route to the right approvers based on business rules, spend thresholds and compliance needs.
- **Seamless ERP and system integration.** Connects to multiple ERP and financial systems, enabling real-time data flow and eliminating reconciliation challenges.
- **Compliance with global e-invoicing mandates.** Ingests invoices in EDI format and ensures they meet regional tax and regulatory requirements before payments are issued.

The bottom line: AP automation, tailored to your business

With a tailored AP automation solution, finance leaders at multinational companies don't have to compromise between efficiency, flexibility and compliance. Instead, they gain an adaptable platform that meets their unique invoice processing needs today — while scaling for the future.

10 key considerations for AP automation in global invoice processing

Traditional AP processes simply can't keep up with the challenges that come with operating on an international scale. To stay competitive and scalable, AP leaders must embrace AP automation solutions that can be tailored for their unique business needs, scale to meet their current and future processing volumes and adapt to an ever-changing payments landscape.

Below are 10 key considerations for selecting an AP automation solution that can effectively manage global invoice processing. From ensuring compliance with evolving e-invoicing regulations to eliminating costly manual tasks, these insights will help you choose a solution that streamlines operations, mitigates risk and positions your AP department for long-term global success.

1. **Compliance with government e-invoicing regulations.** Government mandates around e-invoicing are constantly evolving, and failure to comply can lead to hefty fines and business disruptions. An effective AP automation solution must support global e-invoicing frameworks and adapt to country-specific requirements to ensure compliance. Look for a solution with built-in compliance features and seamless integration with government e-invoicing platforms to ensure invoices are formatted correctly and submitted in compliance with local laws.
2. **Managing diverse regulatory environments.** Different geographic regions have unique financial regulations, reporting standards and tax policies, making global compliance a challenge. AP automation should have the ability to process different tax codes, manage any required documentation and support regulatory reporting to minimize legal risks. Choose a platform with automated tax validation, configurable compliance workflows and real-time audit-ready reporting to simplify adherence to complex and evolving regulations.
3. **Alignment between IT, finance and operations.** AP automation must integrate seamlessly across departments to avoid inefficiencies and misaligned processes. The right solution should facilitate cross-functional collaboration, ensuring IT, finance and operations have centralized access to invoice data and approval workflows. By aligning these departments, businesses can improve operational efficiency, reduce processing delays and enhance financial transparency. Look for a system with user-friendly dashboards, customizable approval hierarchies and secure role-based access to ensure all departments stay aligned.
4. **Integration across multiple ERP systems.** Global companies often use multiple ERP platforms, complicating invoice approvals and data synchronization. A strong AP automation platform should support multi-ERP integration, enabling smooth data transfer and standardized invoice management across diverse business units. Ensure that prospective AP automation solutions have pre-built connectors for leading ERPs, API capabilities for custom integrations and a centralized database to consolidate invoice data across all systems.
5. **Adapting to diverse business practices and invoicing standards.** Companies operating in multiple countries encounter different invoicing rules, languages and document formats. A robust AP automation solution should feature multi-language processing, customizable workflows and AI-driven invoice classification to accommodate regional variations. Standardizing and automating these processes reduces errors, accelerates approvals and ensures compliance with local regulations, enabling smoother operations across global markets. Select a system with AI-powered data extraction that doesn't rely on invoice templates, and multilingual support to process invoices accurately across global locations.

- 6. Interoperability with government e-invoicing platforms.** Many governments now require direct integration with e-invoicing platforms for tax compliance. Global AP automation solutions must offer either seamless API integration with government tax authorities or the ability to ingest and translate EDI streams from those authorities to ensure compliance with local mandates and eliminate manual tax reporting errors. Look for a solution that includes electronic invoicing compliance tools and automated validation to meet the requirements of each jurisdiction.
- 7. Standardization of invoice data formats.** Lack of uniformity in supplier invoices leads to data extraction and processing inefficiencies. Global AP automation solutions should use advanced optical character recognition (OCR) and AI with machine learning to standardize invoice data capture across various file formats, reducing the possibility of errors and accelerating processing times. Ensure that prospective platforms have intelligent invoice classification and data validation to streamline processing and enhance accuracy.

Best-in-class AP automation solutions go beyond simple OCR, incorporating AI-driven data extraction, automated GL coding and intelligent exception handling⁵.

- 8. Automated handling of multi-currency and tax compliance.** Cross-border transactions require careful management of exchange rates, VAT and withholding tax laws. AP automation must be capable of identifying regional tax requirements, applying accurate tax rates and processing currency conversions in real time to prevent tax penalties and payment errors. Choose a system with real-time currency conversion, automated tax calculation and dynamic tax compliance updates to ensure accurate global payment processing.
- 9. Eliminating manual processing costs.** Manual invoice processing is costly and time-consuming, often leading to delays, errors and higher labor costs. Automating invoice intake, approvals and payments reduces human intervention, speeds up cycle times and lowers expenses. Look for features such as touchless invoice processing, AI-driven approvals and automated exception handling to cut down on manual workload and costs.
- 10. Ensuring on-time payments to suppliers.** Delays in invoice processing can strain supplier relationships and cause supply chain disruptions. An efficient AP automation system ensures timely approvals and easy ways to track and monitor pending invoices, helping companies take advantage of early payment discounts and maintain supplier trust. Select a platform with invoice tracking, real-time status updates and robust reporting tools to optimize supplier payments and improve cash flow management.

By selecting an AP automation solution that meets these requirements, AP leaders can enhance compliance, reduce processing costs, improve visibility and strengthen supplier relationships. Such systems ensure that invoices are processed accurately and on time, eliminate the burden of manual tasks and provide the scalability needed to support global growth.

Case study: How Siemens transformed global invoice processing

Siemens, a multinational corporation processing over 3.5 million invoices annually, faced challenges related to fragmented OCR solutions, multiple SAP instances and high manual intervention across various regions. Despite previous investments in AP automation, Siemens struggled with data inconsistencies, slow approvals and heightened compliance risks across its global operations.

To address these issues, Siemens implemented Hyland's machine learning (ML)-powered AP automation solution that standardized invoice processing across over 50 SAP instances and global business units.

The system's intelligent OCR technology and ML algorithms enabled Siemens to achieve a remarkable 90 percent reduction in manual invoice processing while significantly improving invoice classification and line-item data extraction accuracy.

The impact was transformative.

Siemens increased automation rates by up to 80 percent, significantly improving invoice approval cycles and supplier payment timelines. Additionally, the company leveraged real-time dashboards, gaining deeper visibility into financial operations across multiple business units and geographic regions. The implementation of Hyland's solution also enhanced compliance tracking, ensuring that all invoices meet regional tax and e-invoicing requirements accurately and efficiently before payment.

As a result, Siemens significantly improved operational efficiency, reduced costs and optimized supplier relationships, proving that intelligent AP automation is essential for global enterprises.

The time to automate is now

The stakes to automate AP have never been higher for global companies. Inefficient AP processes cost organizations time, money and visibility, while increasing compliance risks and operational inefficiencies. The cost of inaction is mounting, and as government mandates, tax laws and supplier expectations continue to evolve, inefficient AP processes will only become more of a liability.

**Organizations that fail to optimize AP automation
will struggle with data inconsistencies, slow approvals
and rising compliance risks across global operations⁶.**

The good news?

The right AP automation solution can help transform payables into a strategic powerhouse. By selecting a platform that ensures compliance, integrates seamlessly across global ERP systems, standardizes invoice data and eliminates costly manual intervention, AP leaders can increase efficiency, reduce risks and position their organization for sustainable global growth.

Global companies like Siemens have proven the impact of AP automation, cutting processing costs, improving visibility and enhancing supplier relationships. If your company wants to scale with confidence in today's complex global economy, choose an AP automation system that provides flexibility in its configuration and can be easily tailored for worldwide invoice processing success.

About Hyland

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Learn more at [Hyland.com](https://www.hyland.com).



ENDNOTES

- 1 IDC's *AP Versus P2P Automation: The Case for a Hybrid Approach*, February 2023
- 2 [American Productivity and Quality Center \(APQC\)](#)
- 3 [Forrester](#)
- 4 IDC's *SaaSPath Survey*, March 2022
- 5 IDC's *AP Versus P2P Automation: The Case for a Hybrid Approach*, February 2023
- 6 IDC's *AP Versus P2P Automation: The Case for a Hybrid Approach*, February 2023

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