

AnyDoc®INVOICE™ Keeps EKZ's Processes on their Toes

At A Glance

EKZ

Industry

Utilities

Customer Profile

The Elektrizitätswerke des Kantons Zurich (EKZ) is one of the largest energy suppliers in the country. EKZ operates two power stations and a business unit called ELTOP, operating 36 specialty electrical stores and providing electrical installation services. Committed to sustainable energy alternatives and high environmental standards, in the fiscal year 2004-2005 EKZ supplied a total of 5,751 gigawatt-hours.

Challenge

EKZ and ELTOP receive masses of invoices from their bulk suppliers as well as a huge volume of individual invoices, all unique and all on paper. In total, the energy utility gets about 100,000 invoices a year in the Accounts Payable department. The previous manual process was cumbersome and much too time-consuming. The original invoices would be pushed back and forth between the headquarters and the local offices, data had to be entered manually and EKZ often didn't get a supplier's discount for quick payment because of the delays in processing time.

Solution

AnyDoc®INVOICE has enabled EKZ to dramatically speed up its accounts payable process. The solution automatically captures and checks the invoices, putting an abrupt end to rummaging around with paper. Invoice data is also auto-prepared for easy transfer to other systems, principally Open Text, SmartWorkflow and Livelink Archive, as well as SAP and an EKZ internally-developed legacy application.

Benefits

- Process interruptions and bottlenecks are eliminated
- Internal costs are reduced due to increased efficiency
- Immediate reduction in postage and photocopying costs
- Formal checks are performed almost entirely automatically, e.g. checking conformity of sales tax calculations, totaling up figures, etc.
- EKZ obtains supplier discounts for early payment much more frequently
- Financial accounting is always up-to-date providing current data for analysis and planning

Wir bringen Energie



EKZ, the group of electricity utility companies that covers the Zurich area in Switzerland, had an urgent need to streamline its accounts payable processes

for suppliers' invoices. The company's financial accounting manager, Daniel Baumgärtner, says there was no doubt about it. "Shorter processing times mean lower costs – it's as simple as that," he notes. Once the solution was implemented, processing time plummeted from 10-15 days down to 2-5 days. And the cornerstone to this success was AnyDoc®INVOICE. Now the invoices are captured almost entirely automatically and the data reformatted and transferred into the target systems; in this case, Open Text (formerly IXOS) SmartWorkflow and Livelink Archive for processing in SAP.

EKZ is among the largest energy suppliers in Switzerland with a production of 5,751 gigawatt-hours (GWh) in the fiscal year 2004-2005. The group employs around 1,100 staff and has 900,000 customers in 125 municipalities. It also has a service arm, ELTOP, which operates 36 shops, selling a wide variety of power-saving electrical appliances. In addition, ELTOP constructs, extends and repairs high and low voltage installations. An EKZ subsidiary, Certum Sicherheit AG is an independent company that guarantees safety and offers an advisory service on dealing with electricity as well as installation checks.

With such a range of services, there's quite a variety of invoices – for cables, plugs, vacuum cleaners, hair dryers and washing machines, but also for the purchase of electricity and paying for construction work. Every year, EKZ receives about 100,000 paper invoices – 200,000 pages in total. Roughly 65,000 of these are addressed to ELTOP. "Aside from the invoices from our biggest suppliers, no two invoices are alike," says Baumgärtner with a sigh.

Accounts Payable Gets a Boost from Automation

This situation used to give him a major headache, but those days are well over now. With AnyDoc®INVOICE, Baumgärtner and the IT manager Gerhard Hoechle have found that Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software makes light work of it all. Since the implementation, followed by a short period of fine-tuning, the solution automatically recognizes more than 80% of the invoice information needed. "We're continuing with the tuning work," says Hoechle. He mentions that AnyDoc®INVOICE's self-learning capability is used periodically by the accounts payable staff to increase the system's precision even more. It's had a big effect — the manual processing of accounting data has noticeably diminished.

The automation and streamlining of these processes has another positive effect. The accounting staff are always in the picture about financial commitments. "Previously, we never knew quickly enough exactly how much our outstanding accounts payable totaled," explains the chief accountant. The invoices would often arrive in local offices where they would be checked, assigned to an account, and have a signature and perhaps a note added. And then at some point they would arrive at the Zurich headquarters where they would be reviewed again, checked and manually keyed into their SAP R/3 system.

Everyone is Plugged into Greater Efficiencies

Today, the invoices come directly to the head office, where they are scanned and data is captured automatically by AnyDoc®INVOICE. After capturing the invoice data, AnyDoc®INVOICE formats it for easy transfer to SmartWorkflow where the invoices are placed in an "on call" status and then to the SAP system or to an EKZ legacy application. The scanned invoice images go directly into an Open Text electronic archive. Using SmartWorkflow, the invoices are then distributed to the

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subsidiaries where they are checked and assigned to a cost center in the relevant order. Each invoice gets an electronic stamp and is passed to the next manager up in the company hierarchy. If all is well, the invoice disappears from the "on call" state, is booked and paid after the relevant waiting period.

Implementing the entire solution, including adjustments to the SAP system and training, took less than four months. "That's really fast," comments Baumgärtner. His praise goes especially to the expertise, the methodical way of working and the helpfulness of AnyDoc's staff. He says they always kept track of the situation and "worked nice and systematically all the time," even though two other partners (SAP and Open Text) were involved and despite a number of changes in the project organization. Even after the system went live in October 2005, the AnyDoc staff are clearly still interested and committed.

Commitment and cooperation were also received from EKZ staff. About 800 employees were trained, of which 400 were from the ELTOP side of the business. When asked why so many staff were initiated into the new procedures, Baumgärtner comes up with a plausible response. "Sooner or later, each and every person here has something to do with invoices, so they need to know how we do things now."

Things worked out well for EKZ. Baumgärtner says they now have the professional accounts payable processes that was needed severely. And that's only right for a company that advises customers on using energy efficiently and raises the bar in environmental protection. In addition, the utility firm has also benefited financially since some of their suppliers give a discount for rapid payment of their invoices – which happens a lot more often now due to the elimination of manual archiving and the reduction in postage and photocopying costs.