

TIME NEEDED TO LOG INCOMING INVOICES REDUCED BY 75 PERCENT WITH ANYDOC® INVOICE

At A Glance

Industry

Construction

Customer Profile

Based in Zürich, Switzerland, HG Commerciale is a trading cooperative in the building and construction industry and is the market leader of Swiss construction service companies.

Challenge

HG Commerciale receives nearly 230,000 invoices each year from nearly 2,500 vendors. Each invoice is different and the data is often in varying languages. HGC processed these invoices manually, which was slow and error-prone.

Solution

With AnyDocINVOICE and its AnyApp™ technology, HG Commerciale can now capture line-item data automatically, regardless of its location on the page from one invoice to the next. Processing is quicker, and errors have been eliminated.

Benefits

- Verification time reduced by 75 percent, thereby lowering costs.
- Eliminates the risk of errors from manual data entry.
- Promotes job satisfaction by simplifying the work of accounting staff.
- Increased efficiency since invoice reviews and manual data capture are no longer necessary.

HG Commerciale is a cooperative based in Switzerland that trades in building materials and offers its expertise and services to the construction industry.

The organization, which prides itself on its fair prices, on-the-job training for youth, and a preference for locally-produced, eco-friendly products, is the market leader of Swiss construction service companies.

Approximately 2,500 organizations supply products for the cooperative. As a result, they receive nearly 230,000 invoices from them annually. These invoices typically arrive in paper format at company headquarters or at one of its 41 local outlets, where they are reviewed for accuracy and completeness.

The invoice data was then manually entered into the accounting system and the invoice was filed and stored. This outdated mode of data processing was error-prone and very time-consuming.

HG Commerciale was able to completely automate its accounts payable invoice processing, thanks to AnyDocINVOICE and the AnyApp™ technology that fuels it. Now, regardless of where data is on the invoice, it can be captured automatically and transferred into their workflow system.

The Challenge

HG Commerciale (HGC), an employer of nearly 700 people, supplies construction and civil engineering companies with cement, plaster, and building ceramics.

The trading cooperative also provides services to these industries, such as invoicing and payment collection for concrete and surfacing factories. HGC owes its success to its ISO-standardized, certified management system, its top-quality products, fair prices and 41 sales outlets that provide them with a strong local presence.


The builders' merchant does not manufacture products itself, but rather sources them from about 2,500 suppliers. These suppliers send HGC up to 230,000 invoices a year, most of which are different from one another.

Each paper invoice typically contains five to 10 line items on one or two pages, sometimes up to five pages. On top of that, the invoices contain a number of elements in different languages at various points in the document.

Under these circumstances, one could be forgiven for thinking that automating data capture and archiving would be nearly impossible.

The Solution

But automation was exactly what Christian Gadiant of HGC had in mind as he began researching optical character recognition (OCR) solutions, scrutinizing his options very closely. The short-listed products had to prove themselves at the manufacturers' reference customer sites as well as in live tests.



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Of the ten systems Gadiant short-listed, AnyDocINVOICE by AnyDoc Software was the only one that fulfilled all of his requirements. For the chief accountant, the decisive feature was – and still is – the software's freeform capability, provided by AnyDoc's AnyApp technology. It provides reliable recognition of any invoice's contents, even though they come in a wide variety of different formats.

“Although the usual OCR products could recognize the header, they didn’t pick up the individual line items,” explains Gadiant, discussing what he sees as AnyDocINVOICE’s decisive feature. “But that’s actually the most important thing to us.” This is because after the invoices are scanned every morning in the central mail room, all invoice data needs to be captured and verified and the book entries made.

And since January 2006, this is exactly how the process has been organized. Paper handling is virtually complete once the scanning is finished. The paper invoices land in a “today” box and disappear into an archive. And that’s when the work starts on the invoice data and the electronic archive.

Using keyword recognition, AnyDocINVOICE captures all their required data fields, including invoice and order numbers, sales tax rate and amount, payment conditions, net total, and quantity and unit per item. AnyDocINVOICE even validates the sales tax, which can vary from one invoice to the next.

Then, the article data and quantity units are checked against the article master data in their enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, SSA Baan from SSA Global. If necessary, the system converts pricing units to prepare them for Keyflow, HGC’s workflow system from ABC Microfile GmbH.

Finally, the AnyDoc application recognizes incidental and additional costs such as packing, transport, and VOC (a Swiss environmental protection tax levied on certain products). The system adds these costs and sends them to the workflow application for further checks and account allocation.

The electronic task processing system is connected to SSA Baan, which executes the accounting entries for the suppliers’ invoices. The archiving system, WinDream from Windream GmbH, is also connected to the archiving system and stores the scanned documents in TIFF format.

“We no longer have to rummage through the paper archive,” notes Gadiant. “If we need to look at an invoice, we can pull it up in two seconds.”

But the lynchpin of the whole process turned out to be the automatic recognition of the invoice data. That was quite a challenge with five different invoice types, each with differing validation requirements. But with AnyDocINVOICE, terms and logic can be dynamically applied to each type of invoice so that the relevant data will be captured, regardless of what type of bill it is.

In September 2005, AnyDoc Software started implementing HGC’s requirements. The system went live in January 2006, right on time, and is being used for all of their accounts payable invoices. The costs involved were aligned exactly with the original offer.

The seven people working with the AnyDoc system have noticed what a significant difference the solution has made. “We’ve seen time savings of 75 percent for the formal checking and capture of the invoices, as well as far better data quality,” says Gadiant.

The chief accountant adds that they used to find five or six errors per 1,000 invoices due to manual data entry, and this has now been eliminated, along with the time needed for re-reading, checking, and correcting.

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