



AP Automation Case Study: Adams Beverages



Founded in 1937, Adams Beverages is a family-owned and operated beer and non-alcoholic beverage distribution company. They are an Anheuser Busch distributor with branches across Alabama and North Carolina in the United States. In its 83 years of service, Adams Beverages has grown to expand into seven warehouse locations with more than 500 employees.



Challenges

Amy Mullen, the AP/AR Manager, leads accounts payable (AP) for all seven locations. In March 2019, when the company acquired three locations, Mullen realized that they needed an AP automation software to manage the sudden spike in invoices. “We knew we needed help as we were processing almost 2,000 invoices per month and this did not include any product invoices.” Processing invoices in time was becoming a challenge with a great quantity of invoices passing through the company for approvals and archiving. The lack of visibility and control into invoice approvals was causing delays.

“The biggest issue was approvals. Multi-tiered approvals, tracking data, and documentation of approvals needed to be more organized.”

Having multi-tiered approvals is a good practice, but when these tiers are not centralized and visible, approval follow-ups can get slow and exhausting – as was the case with Adams Beverages. The approver couldn’t track data easily; they had to go through a trail of paper. This would take longer if the approver needed clarification or more information regarding an invoice. The AP department could not afford to get tied up in chasing paper invoices or signatures.

The next issue was documentation of approvals. How much time did an invoice take to get approved? How many follow-ups were made? What was the reason for the delay? With the growing number of invoices, it was becoming hard to keep AP running smoothly. The company was looking for a scalable process. “We needed a system that would streamline approvals based on our workflow, which involved multiple levels of people. We wanted to be able to track and see who approved an invoice and when.”

Software Evaluation

Adams Beverages worked with their Sage 100 reseller, Chortek LLP for assistance in improving their AP process. With a history of more than 70 years in delivering financial advice with value-driven tech solutions, the Chortek Business Software Consulting Team understands Sage integrations and recommended a solution from Sage AP Automation (Beanworks).

Adams Beverages went through a research and selection process with their dedicated Chortek account manager, Gail Warren, to find an AP automation solution that would resolve their challenges with remote approvals. They evaluated features such as reporting on approval workflows, robust approval channels, and centralized AP document management with instant access to invoices.

Warren says, “As Adams Beverages was growing and acquiring additional locations, they saw a need to have a better handle on AP invoices. They needed an enhanced solution to manage how these invoices were coming in and how they were getting distributed to managers for approval because the managers were not in the same building – they were all in remote locations.”

Considering the scale of invoices being managed manually coupled with the involvement of multiple remote locations, Chortek introduced them to Sage AP Automation. Warren was aware of the kind of struggles that businesses experience with manual repetitive processes. The challenge was not only to remove those tedious steps, but also have the solution integrate seamlessly with their financial system, Sage 100. “With our knowledge of Sage AP Automation, I knew they would be a good fit for them, and I introduced both parties. It was a perfect fit,” Warren describes.

“Sage AP Automation had more to offer. It integrated nicely with Sage 100. The user interface is great...easy to understand and use,” says Mullen. More importantly, the software gave them the visibility and control that they needed to fast-track approvals. From start to finish, Chortek ensured the beverage giant received the support it needed to implement an AP solution that would maximize their business operations and financial growth.



Benefits

Remote access to AP

One of the core benefits with Sage AP Automation has been remote management. Communication and collaboration with AP employees across all branches have sped up the approval cycle, which is exactly what they were looking for. Managers are able to access invoices instantly and resolve disputes and questions by making comments on the documents in the cloud, without digging through files and paper. Once approved, invoices can be easily slated for payment. “It’s been a huge advantage working remotely with Sage AP Automation.”

The accounting team has been using the software for more than a year now, but during COVID-19 when staff was working remotely, they expanded their use of the automated features.

Managers were able to approve invoices easily through the mobile app, and still continue to. The AP team member can process invoices from a kitchen table and have the manager approve from their smartphone, immediately. With phones being close to us all the time, there is no excuse to put off approvals.

Who needs paper?

Another enhancement is the elimination of paper. With Sage AP Automation, the company receives invoices electronically. "There is little to no need for paper anymore." Some vendors still send paper invoices, but the majority are received electronically, directly into their system. "Sage AP Automation has been fantastic. Thankfully, the pandemic has shown paper-based companies the need to move forward."

The team is now spending less time on data entry and manual tasks. "Non-automated systems require a physical presence. We have very little need to collect, mail, or scan documents." Instead, that time is redirected towards more valuable initiatives that impact Adams Beverages' finance department beyond accounts payable. Invoices are automatically captured, coded, and routed to the approver. From here they can be approved for payments directly. When Adams Beverages had approached Chortek, a bulk of their AP operations were running through manual cycles. "We wanted to minimize those repetitive tasks with simple technology," Warren says. "We are extremely happy to see all the improvements that they've made in their accounts payable in such a short span of time."

Since implementation, Adams Beverages has been able to step out of the weeds, to create a collaborative AP management system. "Very little changed in terms of how we operate from an accounting standpoint during the COVID-19 crisis. It's been an easier adjustment for those who were already automated. It will force everyone to get in the game."