Gain an AP competitive advantage with next-generation AI

equisys

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What this white paper is about:

Accounts Payable (AP) teams that use manual or outdated methods to process invoices face many challenges that hold both themselves and their company back. Such methods are time-consuming, error-prone and expensive.

As a result, many companies are turning to AP automation solutions to gain a competitive advantage.

This white paper is targeted towards finance (specifically AP) teams that use Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central. It explains why your AP automation solution should not only use AI, but *next-generation AI.*

Key takeaways:

1. Manual invoice processing and first-generation AI-based AP automation solutions are no longer sufficient if you want to remain competitive and cutting-edge.

2. Next-generation AI-driven AP automation solutions provide a competitive advantage thanks to immediate and long-term savings, reduced errors and improved accuracy, and enhanced compliance and security.

3. The time savings enabled by next-generation AI-driven solutions free up AP teams to focus on more strategic tasks that benefit the business, rather than spending time on monotonous tasks such as data entry.

Introduction

In a rapidly evolving business environment, organizations face increasing pressure to enhance operational efficiency while ensuring compliance and security. This challenge is especially pronounced for Accounts Payable (AP) teams, which are often burdened by manual invoice processing methods that are time-consuming, error-prone and costly.

Amongst several significant technological advances, including first generation AI, there is one that has emerged as a game-changer or transforming the way AP teams handle invoices: next-generation AI.

This whitepaper explores how next-generation AI-driven automation can provide AP teams with a significant competitive advantage, enabling them to streamline processes, reduce errors and drive down costs.

Why upgrade your process?

Challenges of manual processes

Despite the availability of digital solutions, many AP teams continue to rely on manual invoice processing. This involves physically handling paper invoices, manually inputting data into systems, and cross-referencing information for accuracy. These labor-intensive methods lead to inefficiencies, higher error rates and compliance risks.

The Institute of Finance and Management (IoFM) reports that manual invoice processing carries an average error rate of 8-12%. This not only results in overpayments and missed discounts, but can also strain supplier relationships.

Furthermore, manual processing can cost up to $30 per invoice and take up to 30 days to complete, compared to just $3 to $4 when automated—a significant difference in both efficiency and cost.

The burden of template-based OCR systems

Some organizations have taken initial steps toward automation through first-generation Optical Character Recognition (OCR) systems.

However, these first-generation OCR tools require the creation of templates for each vendor's invoice layout. This is time-consuming to set up and can lead to headaches in the longer term too. If vendors change their invoice formats, AP teams are forced into a continuous cycle of updating templates, significantly reducing the desired efficiency gains.

8-12% error rate associated with manual invoice processing.

Up to $30 to process an invoice manually compared to **$3-4 when automated.**

Why upgrade your process?

Compliance and security risks

Manual and first-generation OCR processes also expose AP teams to compliance and security risks. Financial data found in invoices must be handled securely, and improper management can lead to errors or unauthorized access.

Non-compliance with regulations such as Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) can result in fines, reputational damage and loss of stakeholder trust.

Moving beyond traditional OCR with next-generation AI

Next-generation AI represents a leap forward for AP automation. It eliminates the need to manually set-up templates, which means AP teams can get up and running with an AP automation solution straight away with minimal fuss. Unlike traditional OCR systems that rely on predefined templates to recognize text, next-generation AI uses intelligent OCR and machine learning algorithms to adapt to different formats on its own.

AP teams can process invoices from any vendor without needing to configure the system for each format, drastically reducing maintenance burdens and freeing up IT and AP staff for more strategic tasks.

The competitive advantage

Key features of next-generation AI

- **Intelligent OCR**: Automatically recognizes and processes invoice data, regardless of format, with no need to pre-configure templates.
- **Machine learning**: Continuously adapts to new invoice formats over time, improving accuracy.
- **Data validation**: Ensures that invoice data is correct and consistent with purchase orders and contracts.
- **Advanced fraud detection**: Identifies potential fraud in real time by detecting unusual patterns.
- **Automated workflows**: Routes invoices to the right approvers based on predefined rules, streamlining the approval process.

Benefits of next-generation AI:

Immediate and long-term savings

Next-generation AI provides both immediate time savings and ongoing cost reductions.

Intelligent OCR automates data capture without manual input, enabling AP teams to handle larger volumes of invoices in significantly less time.

Additionally, the self-learning capabilities of next-generation AI eliminate the need for frequent system reconfigurations, further reducing maintenance costs and freeing up IT resources.

Reduce errors and improve accuracy

One of the greatest benefits of next-generation AI is its ability to dramatically reduce errors.

Manual data entry often leads to mistakes, but AI-driven automation ensures greater accuracy by cross-referencing invoice data with purchase orders and contracts.

This not only minimizes costly disputes with suppliers but also improves overall compliance with financial regulations.

The competitive advantage

Enhanced compliance and security

Next-generation AI also offers enhanced security features.

Automated audit trails provide a clear record of every action taken within the system, helping organizations maintain compliance with regulations such as SOX and GDPR. Additionally, role-based access controls limit who can view and edit sensitive financial data, reducing the risk of unauthorized access.

Real-time fraud detection further enhances security by flagging suspicious invoice activity before it becomes a larger issue.
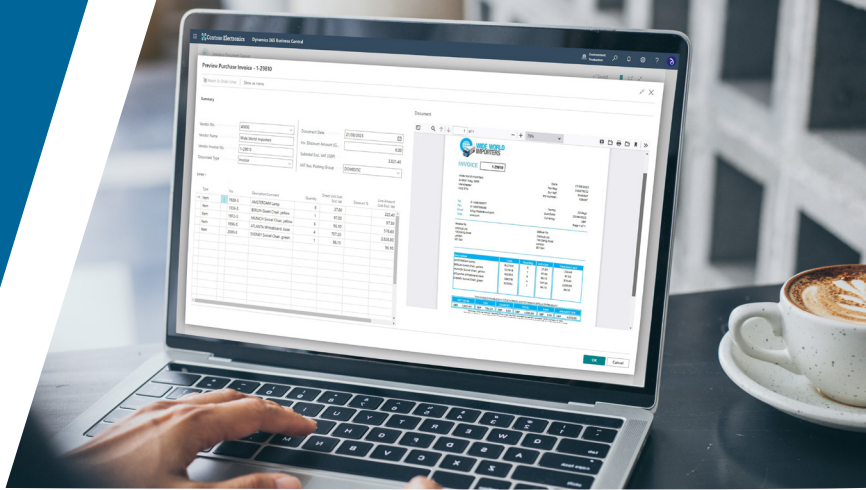
The cost of falling behind

As more companies embrace next-generation AI, AP teams that stick with manual processes or first-generation OCR systems will struggle to keep pace with their competitors.

The inefficiencies and risks associated with traditional methods can lead to lost opportunities, strained supplier relationships and higher costs.

In contrast, businesses that adopt advanced AI solutions will find themselves better equipped to navigate the complexities of modern financial operations.

Transform your AP efficiency

Next-generation AI-driven solutions, such as [Zetadocs AP Automation](#), offer immediate and ongoing benefits for AP teams.

Zetadocs eliminates the need for vendor templates, allowing businesses to start automating their invoice processes within hours, not days. By reclaiming the time spent on manual data entry, AP teams can experience up to 50% time savings, which directly improves operational efficiency and accelerates approval cycles.

A customer who has experienced these benefits is Advanced Media Technologies. Their IT Director, Ed Pasewicz, has this to say:

"My AP team is thrilled with Zetadocs AP Automation. It allows us to be much more accurate in breaking down our costs and really understand our cost/benefit for pretty much everything. It has increased our efficiencies multiple times, and now that we've built some history with OCR, it is really terrific."

Conclusion

Manual invoice processing and template-based OCR systems are no longer sufficient if you want to remain competitive and cutting-edge. Next-generation AI offers a revolutionary solution that automates data capture, reduces errors and improves compliance.

The time savings offered by solutions like Zetadocs, combined with enhanced security and cost reductions, make next-generation AI an essential tool for any organization looking to gain a competitive edge in AP automation.

By embracing next-generation AI, businesses can not only boost operational efficiency but also create a more secure, compliant, and cost-effective financial operation.

To learn more about how next-generation AI can revolutionize your AP processes, visit our website or contact our sales team.

About Equisys

Equisys is a leading provider of AP automation, expense management and document management software on Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central.

Our software is known collectively as Zetadocs. The Zetadocs suite integrates with Business Central to help organizations automate manual processes, cut paper use, save time and money, and reduce their carbon footprint.

We also produce fax software for PCs and web-based project management software.

If you would like more information on our AP automation solution, please visit equisys.com/Solutions/AP-automation/Overview.