Fully integrated in SAP

Anyone driving an expensive car is unlikely to drive it on the motorway with the handbrake on, and is sure to make sure that they only use original parts when it is serviced. The same is true of Ringier Axel Springer AG in their search for a standardised electronic invoice receipt processing for its European branches. As the company uses SAP as its accounting and logistics system, there was only solution in question; one that works fully integrated in SAP without the need for additional interfaces. Just like EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow.

Every interface between two systems means a loss of efficiency and can lead to stability problems in operation. And that is not all: Adapting the systems often required time-intensive work. As such, when it came to Ringier Axel Springer AG’s search for a solution for the electronic management of purchase invoices, one thing was for certain: the solution must work perfectly with SAP.

Founded in 2010 by Ringier AG and Axel Springer SE, Ringier Axel Springer Media AG bundles the Central and Eastern European businesses of the two publishing houses. The joint venture with its headquarters in Zurich is represented in Poland, Serbia, Hungary and Slovakia with a wide range of media, including over 160 digital and printed products. It has premises at a total of eight locations – and each of these premises receives invoices; currently around 80,000 per annum.

With the exception of Poland, all of these invoices are initially processed in paper format in the respective branches: Every purchase invoice passes through the organisation with its corresponding authorisation form. There was already an archive system used
for scanned in invoices. But there was no automated workflow. Poland was a little more advanced: A self-developed workflow was in operation here. But it was not able to identify and scan in text. It could also not be integrated into SAP. “You could say that there were quite a lot of small differences in the way that invoices were processed by Ringier Axel Springer AG. There weren’t any significant differences”, explains Vratko Rovnan, Head of SAP Methods and Processes at Ringier Axel Springer Media AG.

But lots of small differences can also slow down everyday work. – especially when people are working together across national borders. In order to make invoice processing more uniform and to structure invoice processing in a more efficient and secure way, in 2011 the search began for a software solution that would cover the entire purchase invoice workflow with a high degree of automation. “It was also important that there was a web-based mobile client for this solution, which could be used anywhere. We wanted to ensure that it was possible to access the application from all locations using the internet and a laptop or other end device. In addition, we wanted a single solution that worked together perfectly with SAP”, explains Rovnan.

They finally found what they were looking for at EASY SOFTWARE AG: EASY had already been successful with a workflow project for a subsidiary of Axel Springer AG, and, with EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow, offered a well-engineered OEM solution, which precisely fit the requirements and came with good references.

EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow

At Ringier Axel Springer AG, EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow ensures a smooth and efficient workflow for incoming invoices.

The benefits

- Mapping of all document-based processes in SAP without additional interfaces
- Automated recording of around 80,000 purchase invoices at eight scanning stations in five countries
- Automatic transfer via email of incoming electronic invoices to SAP
- Location-independent, position-accurate checking and approval, and audit-proof archiving
- Additional access via web and mobile client
- Greater speed, efficiency and transparency

EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow fully integrated in SAP

EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow is a solution for the workflows relating to purchase invoices that is specialised for use with SAP. It is a solution that builds on the SAP standards and one that maps all document-based processes within the SAP system, fully automatically and without the need for additional interfaces. A basic module manages the individual applications that the client opts for. Initially, however, the Capture
Module EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow takes over the scanning and electronic processing of all receipts. All of the relevant information is not just selected, but also made plausible using the data stored in the SAP system, before the information is then passed onto the most important module: EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow Invoice. This module allows the SAP user to check, approve and archive in an audit-proof way all invoices in their correct position in SAP, or to defer them for additional checking or queries. It doesn’t matter whether it is a bill of charges or an invoice with a SAP order reference.

After scanning, all of the invoices are in the same invoice workflow, regardless of their background, and can thus be processed in the same way. Documents cannot get lost and all information is available at all times, from anywhere.

“This is precisely the way for an international company like us to reduce process costs and increase transparency in invoice processing,” explains Vratko Rovnan. “We have now set up one scanning station at each of our eight locations. Around 300 members of staff have been trained in using the system.”

In addition, Ringier Axel Springer is expecting an even more significant reduction in process costs as a result of the implemented module EASY iCenter Interface Mail. The reason: It ensures that invoices that enter the company via email inboxes as PDF attachments can be incorporated automatically into the invoice workflow. As such, there is no need for scanning at all. All relevant information is automatically read and transferred to SAP, while the original document is archived in an audit-proof manner. Rovnan says: „We have had a very positive experience with this module: It dramatically accelerates the process for inputting invoices.”

Smooth international introduction

Two things are required to introduce a system like this: a lot of expertise and excellent planning. The project was split up into two phases. The project was launched in Switzerland, the former subsidiary in the Czech Republic and in Slovakia. The solution was then introduced in Poland and Serbia soon after. A minimum of two extensive test runs and considerable user tests were completed before the project went live. There was great pressure on the project coordination, as all of the local project teams had to be effectively guided with their respective requirements. The heterogeneous standards of the respective IT systems in the branches also proved to be a key challenge. Each of these organisations had been working
independently, meaning that the various operating systems, browser versions, firewalls and LAN policies all had to be coordinated first. There was, however, great acceptance of the project in all of the countries, meaning that the new work processes connected to the launch of EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow were accepted. In addition, extensive training sessions ensured that every user received the best possible support in working with the new system.

Vratko Rovnan’s experience to date justifies the decision to introduce EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow: “EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow has fulfilled all of our expectations. The same applies to the project support. All external members of staff in the project team have provided us with very professional, individual support. Of course, EASY iCENTER 2.0 xFlow is a ‘living’ system, whose performance and stability we can improve by working with the system on a consistent basis. But the immense benefits of the electronic invoice workflow in terms of speed, efficiency and transparency were reason enough to choose the system over and over again.”