THE DESSERTS OF SUCCESS

Abstract

Mark Watts, the Finance Operations Director of a $40 Bn American confectionary manufacturer, engaged Infosys BPM to help him standardize accounts payable processes across the EMEA region. The chosen solution – Infosys BPM's Accounts Payable on Cloud (APOC), delivered sweet results including insightful data analytics, all round automation, and significantly improved turnaround time.

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Slipping up on payments

Mark Watts, the Global Business Finance Operations Director at a $40 Bn American multinational confectionary and food products manufacturer, was worried with quite a few things on his mind. He was responsible for seamless delivery of finance operations, and was tasked with making both strategic and tactical decisions for the EMEA region. Thus, he played a vital role in bringing about synergy between the CFOs of the various entities within the region. Mark shared complete decision-making authority along with the company's global process owner, on process standardization exercises across delivery centers within EMEA countries.

Mark had been working with various controls and compliance teams to ensure that financial controls were in place to avoid duplicate or over payments. Yet, over the course of the past year there were multiple such instances of duplicate or over payments. Mark was also worried about the payment on time (POT), a key performance indicator that was constantly slipping.

Trying to identify the reasons behind the challenges, Mark realized that one key reason was 100% of the accounts payables (AP) processes being manual, with the existing application serving only as a basic case management solution. He also found that high process variations across the EMEA countries impacted the finance teams' ability to follow standard operating procedures.

Mark was worried with this situation, and needed an integrated solution that would help standardize the processes, reduce the manual effort and also avoid any human errors.

A next-gen, integrated solution

Mark realized that the best approach to have an integrated solution, would be through an external service provider. He was aware of Infosys BPM's rich heritage of solving complex business process challenges for large global companies, and expertise in transformation. Mark quickly called his point of contact at Infosys BPM, William Bennett.

During the initial consultations, William explained how Infosys BPM would deploy its proprietary solution, accounts payable on cloud (APOC) – a next-generation platform for accounts payables, to address Mark's challenges. Using a business process-as-a-service (BPaaS) model, William's team would manage Mark's AP services end-to-end using the cloud.

Approach summary

Accounts payable on cloud

Business process-as-a-service

Next-generation platform

Five-phase project delivery

The partnership kicked off in the December of 2020, when Infosys BPM rebadged 270 of Mark's staff in Poland to work on its own rolls. With the scope of the new arrangement, including many of Mark's AP processes such as procure to pay (P2P), order to cash (O2C), and record to report (R2R), Infosys BPM's transition team approached project delivery in five phases. These five phases with some of their components were as detailed below, with both organizations required to focus on key milestones in each phase.

- **Plan** – project kick off, project charter, project governance, project plan, resource mobilization, infrastructure readiness

- **Design** – APOC design template review, customer process mapping with APOC flows, architecture reviews, deployment strategies finalization, sign-offs on both business and interface (IT) requirements documents

- **Develop/ configure** – core platform configuration, data integration, unit testing, setting up user acceptance criteria

- **Test** – system integration testing, user acceptance testing, user manuals, trainings, communications to end users

- **Roll out** – cut-over execution, production go live, final capability transfer to Mark's operations team

As each country delivered AP processing using their own formats and processes, the upcoming change to their existing ways of working precipitated some resistance. Mark had his work cut out to secure buy-in from the regional process owners. For William,

several customizations requested by Mark increased the project time required for new builds and testing. But both these issues among others were overcome by the close collaboration between the two. Mark agreed that decision authority owners were to be in place right at the start of every phase to avoid repeated iterations of change requirements.

In the fifth and final phase of project delivery, the rollout was first planned for multiple countries within the Europe region. Mark was concerned both about user adoption as well as overcoming the resistance of getting end users trained in time for the rollout. Without both these pieces falling together, he worried that the data flowing out from the platform would not be accurate. Yet, Mark's concerns eventually turned out to be unfounded.
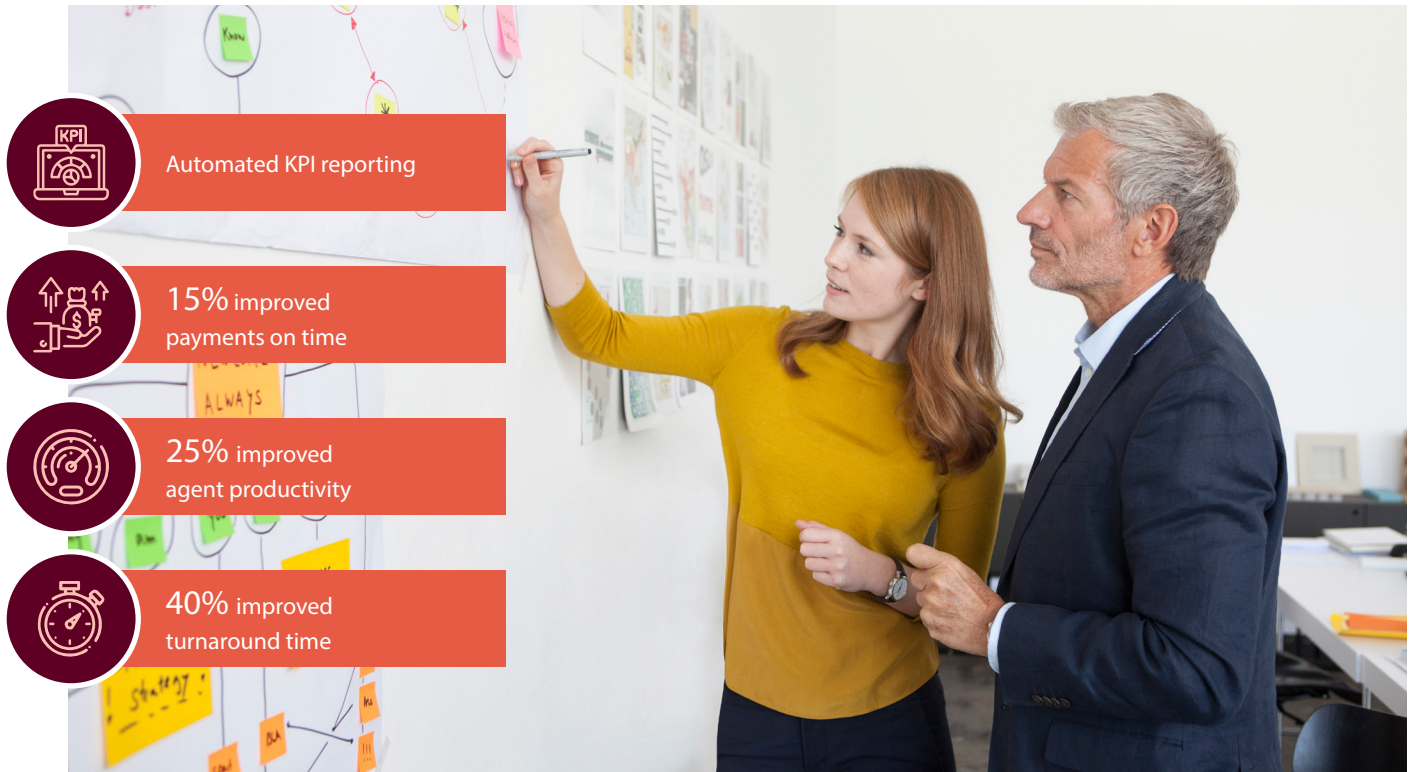
The icing on the cake

APOC soon started delivering results for Mark, such as best in class data analysis, due to the introduction of extra categories. The platform also improved the resolution rates for overdue invoices pending in approvers' baskets, through automating the reminders sent to the approvers. The KPI reporting, which was earlier being done based on manual comments for every single item, was also completely automated. Further, APOC provided Mark with end-to-end visibility into the flow for rejected invoices, which supported him in driving improvement projects.

Key benefits

- Automated KPI reporting
- **15%** improved payments on time
- **25%** improved agent productivity
- **40%** improved turnaround time

With this solution, Mark was able to bring 15% improvement in payment on time metrics, 25% improvement in agent productivity, and 40% improvement in operations turnaround time, due to the process standardization across regions.

William added another delivery center in India, to support Mark's new service line of supply chain finance, with the staff strength in both centers totaling over 400. The successful implementation of APOC within timelines and with quality outcomes had given him immense visibility, as well as multiple accolades, within the organization.

Names have been altered to preserve the identities of the people involved.

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