

SHORTERM

Automating 'Individually' Prepared Invoices for Employment Agencies

Overview

■ Challenge

- To automatically print copy timesheets with invoices
- To automate customised bills with contractor charges sub-totalled according to the customers own cost-centre protocol
- To reduce the time to prepare invoices
- To integrate timesheet and invoice images with both RDB and Tempaid business management systems

■ Scope

- 1000 + invoices per week
- Up to 300 timesheets to be attached to each invoice

■ Key Benefits

- Customised invoices without manual preparation
- Easier credit control administration integrated onscreen viewing of outgoing invoices
- Faster resolution of timesheet queries with linked timesheet and invoice images to both business management systems
- Releases 3,500 hours per annum for more invoice & timesheet accuracy checks which helps to build customer confidence

■ Application Integration

- Integrates with RDB, TempAid and Castelle FaxPress
- Output & document management & Archive for Tiff faxes, PDF, MS WORD, Excel, email & faxes

■ Why AutoFORM LaserNet?

- Recommended by AMS for use with Castelle FaxPress
- Proven capability to automate and streamline invoice processing
- Provides a single solution to enhance invoice creation as well as document imaging integration



The Challenge

Success often brings its own challenges. That is what Shorterm discovered when they grew from a small specialist engineering employment agency to a group of three companies with a turnover of £70 million, providing 25,000 contractors to leading manufacturers such as Rolls Royce and British Airways.

However, as the business grew so did the complexity of the invoicing process. Martin Perry, Finance Manager explains: "Each week we produce over 1,000 invoices. With some clients employing up to 300 contractors at any one time every invoice needs to state precisely where each contractor has worked, who authorised the employment, the project number, as well as the time spent. Each invoice can run to 35 pages. Furthermore, we support each invoice with copies of the individual signed timesheets."

Martin Perry continues: "Despite this attention to detail, we were receiving an increasing number of requests for customised invoices to subtotal contractors charges according to the clients individual cost centre protocol. We feared that the only way to achieve this was to re-create the invoices in MS Word. In addition there was a need to reduce payment delays. The highest cost for any agency is financing the cost of paying contractors before being paid by the client. Shorterm make contractors payments in the region of £3.5 million each month. Therefore any reduction in days sales outstanding (DSO) would make a dramatic improvement to profitatitability."

RDB and TempAid Solutions

The use of specialist recruitment software RDB and TempAid from Oxford Software had delivered many efficiencies, however the invoice process was still reliant on laborious manual preparation. This was made all the more difficult by a stand-alone imaging system which meant that faxed timesheets had to be individually printed and collated with invoices. The result was that the weekly invoice cycle was taking a team of eight the whole of Friday and often most of Monday to complete.

*AutoFORM has cut
invoice preparation
time from
TWO DAYS to
TWO HOURS,
whilst improving
the level of invoice
detail*

AMS recommends a solution: AutoFORM LaserNet

So this was the business dilemma: clients valued the detail in Shorterm's invoices—indeed it was helping them to win new business, but Shorterm needed to find a way for them to be produced in a more efficient way.

Anthony Sargent, Shorterm's IT Director recognised that complementing their existing invoicing systems with process management technology would help them to streamline and automate the customer billing process.

More Cost Effective than Custom Programming

Shorterm's process automation consultants, AMS recommended AutoFORM LaserNet developed by EFS Technology. Not only would AutoFORM provide the functionality that Shorterm were immediately looking for, it offered a number of other process automation opportunities for the future. AutoFORM also proved to be a more cost effective alternative to custom programming of the RDB and TEMPAID software, which could have cost over £100,000.

Anthony Sargent comments: The project had a number of technical challenges, but both EFS Technology and AMS worked hard to meet them. The solution that they delivered has brought significant costs savings and improved customer service by:

- **Automating the printing of timesheets with invoices:**

AutoFORM captures the incoming faxed TIFF timesheets, converts them to PDF and sends them to an electronic archive. As the invoice is generated AutoFORM collects the associated timesheets and prints them together, thereby eliminating tedious manual collation.

This releases the team of eight for one day a week to carry out more accuracy and validity checks on the invoices & timesheets. This in turn helps to increase customers confidence in the trustworthiness of the invoice information, reduces the number of invoice queries and the risk of delayed payments

- **Automated Custom Billing—64 invoice variations:**

AutoFORM has met Shorterm's requirement to produce 'customised' invoices, without resorting to MS Word. AutoFORM automatically groups and subtotals contractor charges according to the customers cost centre protocol. For example, by site worked, job function, project number and a number of other criteria. This helps customers to pass invoices along the approval chain, without delays or query. "Customers are finding this service extremely helpful. In fact it is a definite competitive advantage" says Martin Perry.

Shorterm's customer service staff set the invoicing rules in the RDB customer account. This is just a matter of clicking on a series of tick boxes, so it is very easy to do and can be changed at any time. As the invoice is sent to print, AutoFORM collects the formatting rules and sorts the TempAid output into one of the 64 invoice variations. "Powerful and extremely effective," says Anthony Sargent.

- **Electronic delivery.** AutoFORM interacts with Shorterm's existing Castelle FaxPress to arrange for automated delivery of invoices by print & post, email or fax according to the customers preference.

- **Integrated Onscreen Invoice Viewing**

Customer-service staff are empowered with complete billing & payment histories at their desktop so they can resolve queries immediately. Invoices & related timesheets are viewed side by side direct from the TempAid invoicing and RDB CRM suite. Remittance advice notes will also be added in the near future. Martin Perry "AutoFORM is much faster than our old orphaned imaging system and helps us to resolve any payment issues without having to call the customer back. We are already beginning to see dramatic improvement to our days sales outstanding ratios, which in turn will improve profitability."

- **Replaces short names to full company names:**

TEMPAID fields are limited to 16 characters, which can mean that some company and personal names are shortened on the invoice, which at best can be discourteous and at worse can cause confusion, particularly when companies use divisional names such as British Telecom-Building Services. AutoFORM collects the full name from the RDB database and automatically replaces the TempAid short name—without any further operator input. Quick, simple and effective.

- **Customer Self Service Web Access to Invoices.**

Next year, customers will be able to view their invoice and timesheet contractor records via a login controlled web-link on Shorterm's customer website. "This is another customer service benefit that we will be able to offer by using AutoFORM" says Anthony Sargent.

Immediate Benefits

The Payback? "ROI will be achieved in less than a year just by cutting the invoice preparation time from two days to two hours, but there are a number of additional benefits. In our opinion a year is a very fast payback period and compares favourably to other IT investments" says Anthony Sargent.

Personnel Records

Anthony Sargent concludes: "The implementation has proved to be very worthwhile and we are already looking to use AutoFORM to deliver similar efficiency benefits to other areas of the business. The contractor personnel record warehouse may be a good place to start!"

*AutoFORM is
already making a
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to our DSO - days
sales outstanding*