



SETTLING COMFORTABLY ON THE CLOUD

Abstract

One of the world's leading global logistics supply chain companies found settling its invoices lacking efficiency due to the non-transparent processes of its finance service provider. Also, there was a need to replace the incumbent solution with the record-to-report (RTR) solution. That is why Warren Henderson, the Innovation Lead for the company's finance shared service centre bet on Infosys BPM, who suggested Infosys Accounts Payable on Cloud (APOC) and Blackline as a transformative alternative. This case study details how APOC combined with RPA for automated invoice posting and Blackline for RTR, paid the company and Warren big dividends.



The need for enhancements

Warren Henderson, the Lead for Innovation and Transformation at the finance shared service centres (SSCs) of one of the world's leading supply chain management companies, decided it was time for drastic changes. As part of his role, Warren managed all service providers, ensuring that they delivered solutions seamlessly. He was a key decision maker for implementing standardisation, continuous improvement, and automation for finance processes in over 60 countries across 6 global regions the company operated in. However, all was not well. Feedback from internal customers and stakeholders across the company's locations had shown dissatisfaction with the service quality of accounts payable (AP)

and record-to-report (RTR) functions and Warren, had been trying to figure out the reasons behind this.

Warren's company was dependent on a single vendor for AP and RTR functions across global locations for over a decade, supported by their proprietary technology solutions. Warren was facing challenges with lack of operations visibility and standardisation across countries. The finance SSC's monthly dashboards were manually created, and did not reflect right view of processes across its various stages. On investigating further, Warren realised that the vendor had not fully explored all available opportunities to implement automation. This meant that the SSC's

teams had to spend manual effort to process invoices, post entries, perform reconciliations, and manage month end close, aided by excel spreadsheets and emails.

Warren was looking for ways to enable 'best in class' process and ways of working. All these factors played on Warren's mind, as he finally decided to terminate the vendor's contract and onboard a new service provider. He then started looking for a partner who would enable digitalisation, with better visibility and controls.

A partner with transformation mindset

After evaluating several service providers and their solutions, Warren decided to approach one of the leading digital transformation providers to handle the transformation and, settled on Infosys BPM to focus on the two functions. With Digital in its DNA, Infosys BPM was contracted to deploy its next-gen platform solutions to drive transformation and manage end-to-end services. The transformation roadmap included:

- Proprietary and future-proof Accounts Payable on Cloud (APOC) platform

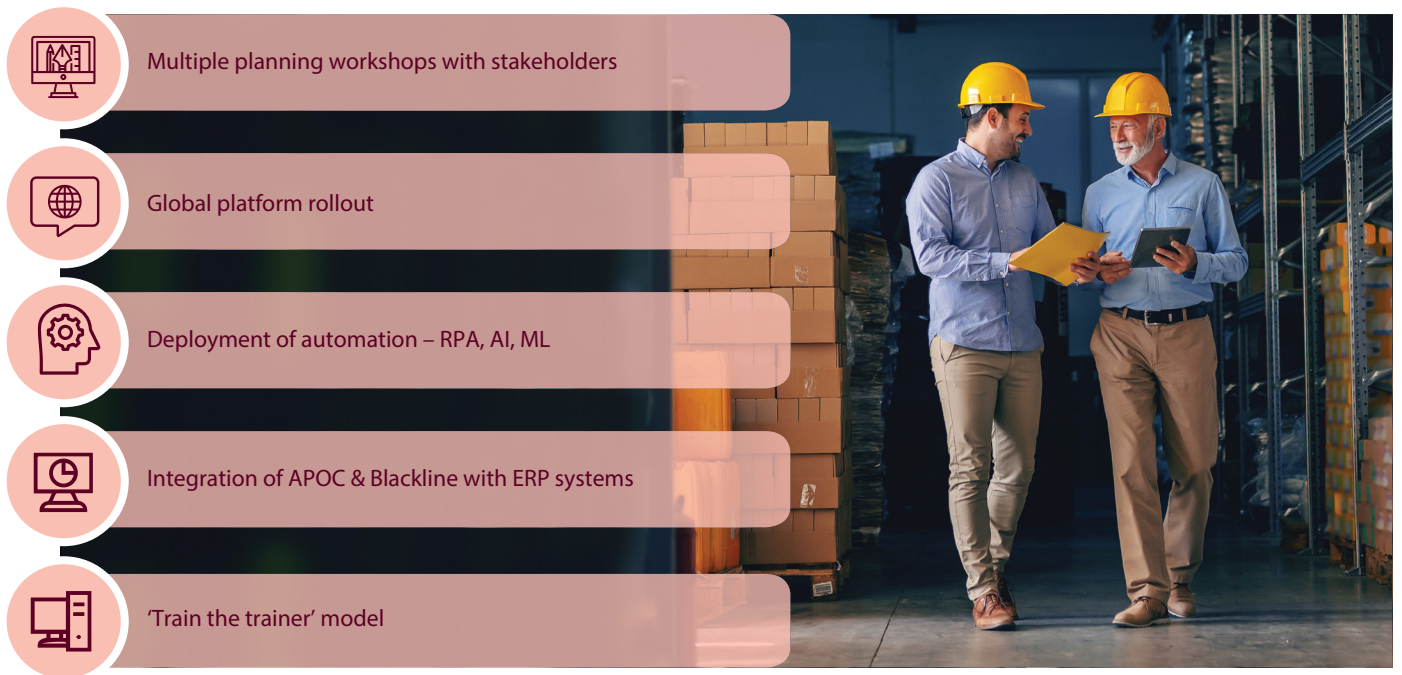
- A leading partner solution BlackLine – a unified cloud for finance and accounting designed to automate the entire finance close process

On completion of the contract paperwork in December 2019, Infosys BPM assigned the program to Andrew Palmer and his transformation team consisting of AP & R2R techno-functional experts, to work on Warren's processes. The overall scope of the project would eventually see a deployment of over 600 Infosys BPM staff to service Warren's company's requirements.

The team held initial set of workshops with the finance stakeholders, such as the global process owner and regional finance leads to understand the existing challenges.

While the workshops served primarily to align the process owners on the need for a standardised process with digitalisation, they also helped to ensure that country-specific nuances for the processes and customisation needs were considered during standardisation.

Approach summary



During the workshops, the team highlighted that there were multiple stakeholders with no single decision authority, which would lead to lengthy approval cycles to baseline requirements. To prevent this and ensure a frictionless deployment of the platforms, Warren identified a single point of contact for every region and assigned himself as the overall lead for the transformation, which would help Andrew and the Infosys BPM team to get the required support and faster approvals from stakeholders.



Deployment of platforms and digital workers

With the transformation framework in place, Warren and the Infosys BPM team collaborated together, quickly got down to work, using a three-stage approach to minimise the impact of the switch from the incumbent AP and RTR platform and related automations.

First Stage: Establish the base process with digital levers to enable transition from the incumbent vendor to Infosys BPM

- AP process: The team rolled out the base version of Infosys APOC platform globally, over a span of six months across 60+ countries, 6 regions, and more than 500 mailboxes. Over 5000 users were onboarded on the platform, and it started enabling ~2.5 million transactions annually across the globe
- RTR function: BlackLine was rolled out with the modules of account reconciliations and task management, over seven months across 11 clusters

and 107 entities, with 32k accounts. More than 300 users were onboarded on to the platform to digitally manage the process with real-time visibility of the month end close (MEC) and account reconciliations processes

Second Stage: Standardisation and optimisation of the deployment with inherent features and automation levers of robotics & AI/ML

- APOC: The team implemented 32 bots with 90% adoption of over 17 intelligent automation use-cases. In addition, the team also deployed AI/ML utilities for flagging and auto-rejection of non-invoice documents and duplicate invoices
- BlackLine: The team leveraged Blackline's inherent features to standardise the reconciliation process. There was an additional layer of automation, driven by robotics for

general ledger balance data transfer. The task module with its automated notifications and reminders ensured a controlled MEC with informed insights and real time visibility

Third Stage: Integration of the solution

- APOC: The Infosys BPM team integrated the APOC platform with the company's ERP system for data validation and auto-population of key invoicing fields.
- BlackLine: The platform aided in standardisation of the reconciliation process across various clusters. There were additional modules of transaction matching and journals which were integrated with the account reconciliation module to provide substantial benefits of automation, effort reduction, and enhanced process controls.

Throughout these three phases, the team used a 'Train the Trainer' model for end-user training, to ensure a quick adoption and seamless transition to the new platform. Infosys BPM ensured that the team had regular governance through daily and weekly cadences with the key stakeholders, apprising them on the Project progress and support needed and accelerating the momentum.





The big outcomes of betting big

Post deployment of APOC, the end-to-end platform offered Warren a host of benefits, including reduced handling time, enhanced stakeholder experience,

and actionable insights. With APOC's API integration with the company's ERP, the AP staff also benefitted from automated data validation and population, standardised

invoice numbers across the globe, and multi-invoice automation.

Key benefits

- 400k+ manual effort savings
- Automated data validation and invoice posting
- ~50% reduction in backlogs
- 50% improvement in productivity, with low-touch/no-touch invoice processing
- Automated ~30% of reconciliations effort
- Central repository for future reference and audit support

With Blackline platform as a transformation lever, Warren was able to replace the incumbent solution and get a scalable and future-ready solution in place. This solution could help achieve multiple objectives such as improved controls and visibility, process standardisation, automation, system integration and enhanced stakeholder experience. The solution with its inherent capabilities helped bring about process efficiencies of ~30% and further with its integrated modules and robotics layer has the potential of automation to the tune of ~70%.

APOC's AI/ML driven checks and auto-rejection of duplicate invoices contributed to 2.5% of global volume, which eliminated the duplicate invoice payments issues.

The Infosys BPM team was also glad to hear how the platform was enabling automated data extraction of 75% volumes using optical character recognition with 90% accuracy. Further, the standardised invoicing processes enabled Warren to achieve touchless processing for certain countries, while the standardisation of processes across 40 mailboxes/countries, helped in reduction of backlog by 50%. In all, APOC enabled automation of ~60% of all invoice postings to the company's ERP with a success rate of 90%, translating to over 400K hours of manual effort savings.

For the RTR function, Blackline enhanced the controls environment with real time visibility of the process. Further, the resource capacity was enhanced by

30% through inherent efficiencies. The scalable solution in place laid a roadmap for digitalisation and automation, moving the process to a touchless regime with a ready reckoner system in place for future references and audit support.

Both Warren and the Infosys BPM team were appreciated by the leaders for their exceptional efforts. The best of breed digital solutions deployed had enabled enhanced controls environment and transformed operations with process efficiencies, effectiveness, and experience. Warren was successful in turning around the centre's performance and was promoted as Director for its Global Finance SSCs.

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

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