

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE AUTOMATION

Keys to Building the Justification for Accounts Payable Automation

Unlock data-driven insights, measurable benefits,
and strategic advantages that strengthen the case for
modernizing AP operations



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Guide Overview

The purpose and value of AP automation

Accounts Payable (AP) departments in the transportation industry face unique challenges. Including Asset Maintenance, Operations, and Carrier Settlements. Many continue to rely on manual processes, while others have adopted partial digital workflows yet still depend on humans for data entry, GL coding, and document management. These methods are slow, error-prone, and labor-intensive.



This guide explores the benefits of automating accounts payable using **Artificial Intelligence** (AI), **Robotic Process Automation** (RPA), and the **Digital Workforce**. It provides practical insights for transportation providers seeking to improve efficiency, reduce errors, protect cashflow and maximize the value of their AP teams. By the end, you'll have a clear roadmap for building a business case for automation and implementing solutions that deliver measurable ROI.

AP Today

Modern challenges shaping AP operations

Accounts Payable departments in transportation face increasing pressure to operate efficiently. Many still depend on manual entry even with digital routing, creating bottlenecks, errors, and high labor costs.

Key Definitions

AI

The ability for systems to learn and perform tasks that previously required human intelligence

RPA

Software bots that automate repetitive human tasks

DIGITAL WORKFORCE

AI + RPA working together to perform end-to-end processes, escalating exceptions to humans only.



Document imaging workflow alone is not a Digital Workforce. It improves document routing but does not process the data.

The Digital Workforce can manage routine AP transactions faster and more accurately than human staff, freeing humans to focus on exceptions and relationship-building with suppliers and internal teams.

Why Change AP?

The cost of inefficiency in manual systems

Manual AP systems introduce inefficiencies and operational challenges:



Remote and Mobile Workforce

Connecting with remote workers and approvers is difficult, causing delays, increasing fraud risk, and complicating chain-of-custody enforcement.

Vendor Inquiries

Staff spend significant time answering *“When will I get paid?”* questions, particularly in understaffed departments, leading to overtime and dissatisfaction.

Missed Payment Terms and Discounts

Manual processes make it easy to overlook deadlines or discounts, affecting cash flow and supplier relationships.

Lack of Purchase Order Systems

Without POs, AP is responsible for verification, causing delays, reducing visibility, and complicating P&L reporting and proactive decision-making.

Low Straight-Through Processing

Manual matching slows staff productivity and increases labor costs.

Automation addresses these challenges, speeding processing, reducing errors, and improving visibility and relationships across the supply chain.

Barriers to Automation

What's held AP departments back

Barriers to automation include:



Limited capital budgets



Competing priorities and resources



Traditional accounting methods



Supplier adaptation concerns

The biggest hurdle is often building the business case. When deployed effectively, AP automation delivers clear ROI: reducing labor, improving accuracy, and enhancing operational efficiency.

Building the Case

How to justify and prioritize automation

Creating a business case for AP automation highlights the ways automation improves efficiency, accuracy, and supplier experience. Key areas include:

Instant Access to Transaction Status

Automation provides real-time visibility into each invoice. System logs track how long an invoice has been in the system, who viewed it, and its retention schedule. This transparency reduces inquiries and improves oversight.

Better Supplier Experience

Suppliers can self-serve through portals or get automated status updates, reducing inquiries and allowing AP teams to focus on meaningful work.

Shared Access to Images and Data

Integrations allow documents and data to be shared across RMIS, accounting, and asset maintenance systems. Mobile access ensures approvers can review and act anytime. Dashboards provide management with a clear view of liabilities, minimizing late fees and maximizing discount opportunities.

Standardized Process Flows

Automated workflows ensure business rules and security requirements are enforced. Attempted deviations are flagged, and auditing and compliance tasks are built into the system, reducing manual stress for AP teams.

Replacing Manual Processes with the Digital Workforce

Invoices from email, web portals, FTP, or scans are processed by AI OCR. AI learns to handle invoices like a human but faster and more accurately, 24/7. Tasks include:

- *GL coding*
- *Fraud detection*
- *Purchase order matching*
- *Back-filling accounting and maintenance systems*
- *Routing unmatched items for human review*

Spreadsheets can be imported directly to reduce data entry even further.

AP Automation Features

Solutions that power modern AP systems

To maximize the value of the Digital Workforce, an AP system should include:

Purchase Order Creation at the Time of Purchase

Centralizes purchasing, reduces revenue leaks, and improves straight-through processing.

Early Invoice Capture

Processing invoices centrally at their source reduces lost invoices and keeps suppliers informed through portals.

AI-Driven Data Entry

Automates GL coding, invoice matching, fraud detection, and spreadsheet imports.

Workflow Routing and Exception Management

Ensures exceptions are flagged and handled promptly.

Supplier Portal

Gives suppliers self-serve access to invoice status, reducing inquiries and improving relationships.



Digital Workforce Workflow & Benefits

How AI and RPA transform performance

The Digital Workforce executes end-to-end AP processes:



Invoices are captured via email, web portal, FTP, or scanned documents



AI OCR extracts and validates data automatically



Tasks such as coding, fraud checks, PO matching, and back-filling are completed without manual intervention



Unmatched or exception invoices are routed for human review

This approach ensures speed, accuracy, and operational efficiency while freeing AP teams to focus on exceptions and supplier relationships.

Benefits and ROI

Proving value through measurable outcomes



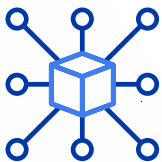
Faster, more accurate invoice processing



Lower operating costs with less manual work



Built-in compliance and audit readiness



Stronger, more reliable supplier relationships

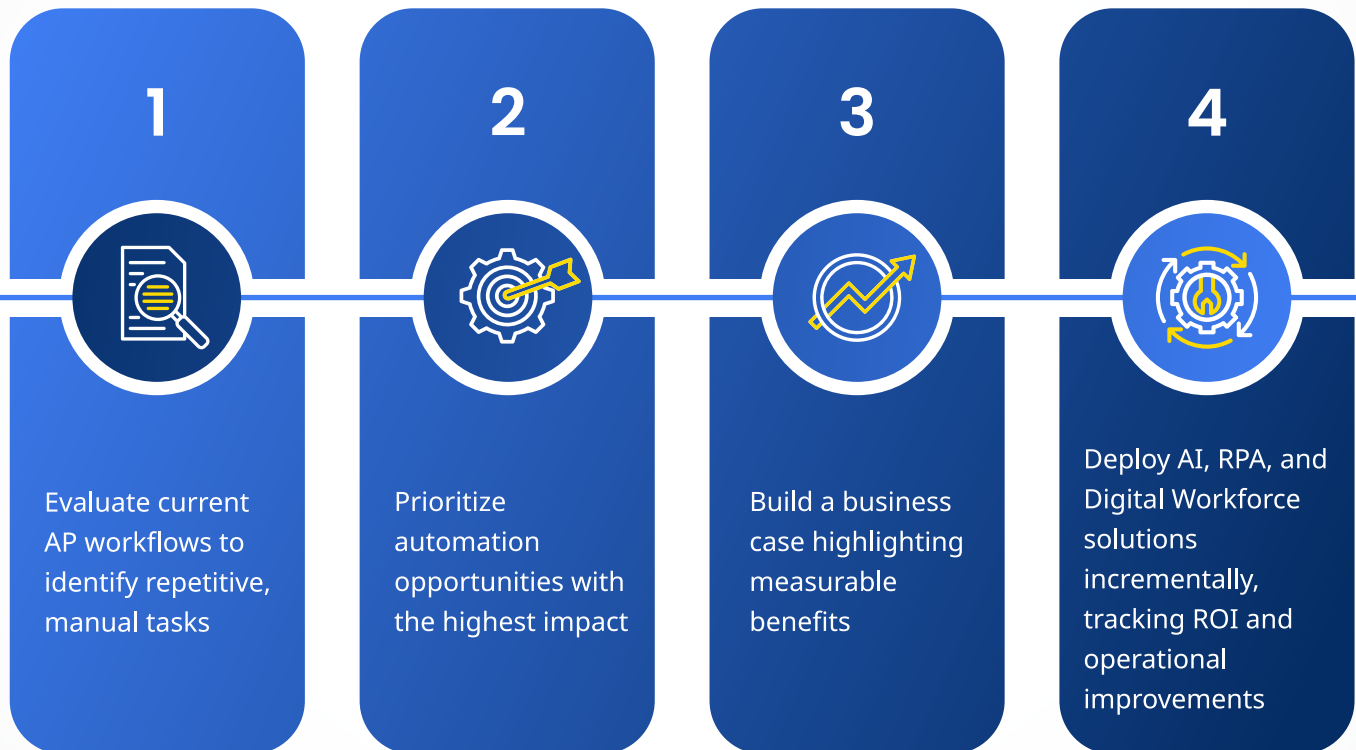


Healthier cash flow through timely payments

By implementing an automated AP system with a Digital Workforce, transportation providers can achieve significant operational improvements and a compelling ROI.

Next Steps

Your roadmap to AP automation success



With the right approach, AP automation transforms efficiency, accuracy, and supplier engagement—setting the stage for a more agile, scalable, and modern accounts payable function.



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