



Hammer Group accelerates invoice processing with flexible cloud-based digital workflows



Leading Swiss manufacturer of metal solutions increases productivity and transparency into financial obligations by integrating DocuWare Cloud with Microsoft Dynamics.

COMPANY & CHALLENGE

Hammer Group is a leading producer of high-quality metal solutions for a wide range of industrial applications. The group's 220 employees design and manufacture metal products, such as street furniture, benches, bike and pedestrian shelters, steel fire doors and balconies. An employee-owned mutual cooperative, Hammer Group is headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland and has six subsidiaries with six production locations.

With almost 100 years of experience in metal processing, the subsidiaries of Hammer Group are all experts in their respective fields. Over the years, each of the subsidiaries developed their own business processes to fit their specific operating model and working environment, supported by a central accounting function supporting the managing, checking and approving of financial documents, such as invoices.

Previously, both the head office and six subsidiaries at Hammer Group were heavily reliant on paper-based working. For example, the group stored multiple copies of paper invoices in a central archive as well as at smaller archives across the six subsidiaries. Although this approach ensured that local teams had quick, easy access to financial documents, it also created inefficiencies and heavier workloads.



From left to right: Andreas Pascutto, Sales Manager, Ambit Group, Giuseppe de Luca, Head of IT & Real Estate, Hammer Group, Lisa Strutz, IT Application Consultant, Hammer Group, Mario Lechner, Solution Consultant, Ricoh Switzerland, Renia Beylemans, CFO / Head of Finance, Controlling & HR, Hammer Group

Lisa Strutz, IT Application Consultant at Hammer Group, says:

“We spent a lot of time packaging and sending documents between subsidiaries and our central office, with some invoices in transit for so long that they were only fully processed after their due date. And when invoices arrived, our team would manually sort and review the details and also check additional accounting information. All of this took time and slowed down monthly and annual accounting tasks.”

To improve efficiency and productivity, Hammer Group looked to streamline invoice processing across all entities, increasing transparency and reducing time-consuming working.

Renia Beylemans, CFO / Head of Finance, Controlling & HR at Hammer Group, says: “Our goal was to reduce the amount of paper invoices processed manually and mailed between departments and subsidiaries. We wanted to standardise approval workflows, while offering flexibility to our subsidiaries to adapt processes and thresholds to their own needs.”



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SOLUTION

Working with enterprise resource planning (ERP) system implementation partner Ambit Group, Hammer Group planned a more efficient approach. The key components for the solution included remote access to a central digital archive for users across all six subsidiaries, which would eliminate the need for costly and time-consuming mailings, and automated invoice processing to accelerate financial workflows.

Furthermore, as Hammer Group is planning to move from the ERP software Microsoft Dynamics AX to the next-generation cloud-based Microsoft Dynamics 365, easy integration with both applications was essential. And to align its IT to its decentralised business structure, Hammer Group looked for a fully managed cloud service.

Giuseppe De Luca, Head of IT & Real Estate at Hammer Group, says: "When we found DocuWare Cloud, we quickly realised it was the best fit for us. It's a future-proof cloud service that is easy to use, very flexible and would integrate well with our ERP system. We also knew that we could count on outstanding service from Ricoh. They could also provide additional support should we expand into new markets, regions and countries in the future."

DocuWare Cloud runs on Microsoft Azure in a secure, high availability configuration. With both DocuWare Cloud and its ERP system running on Azure, Hammer Group ensures fast performance and easy scalability. Furthermore, using the Microsoft Dynamics AX Connector for DocuWare enables seamless integration between the ERP platform and DocuWare Cloud.

In collaboration with Ambit Group and Ricoh, Hammer Group transformed its invoice processing and reimagined established workflows with a digital cloud mindset. In the first phase of the new process, the group uses DocuWare Cloud to capture and archive electronic and paper invoices on arrival. Then, by combining DocuWare Cloud with an intelligent invoice recognition add-on, Hammer Group automatically extracts details such as item lines, before matching invoices with purchase orders stored in Microsoft Dynamics AX.

"By combining powerful tools, we've built a highly flexible, reliable and secure invoice management workflow in the cloud," explains Giuseppe De Luca. "Ambit Group and Ricoh helped us develop standardised yet customisable approval processes for the entire group. For example, we can define different cost thresholds for each subsidiary to ensure approvals run quickly and efficiently while complying with varying approval guidelines."



Thanks to the comprehensive automation and archiving features, we no longer manually sort and file all the invoices. That's a huge time saver for us, eliminating about 26 days of time-consuming work per year.



Lisa Strutz, IT Application Consultant at Hammer Group



BENEFITS

Using DocuWare, Hammer Group has accelerated its digital transformation and substantially increased operational efficiency. Building on the future-oriented cloud solution, the group has developed streamlined digital workflows, helping to accelerate invoice processing and making life much easier for all teams. And by adopting more paperless working, Hammer Group has improved its environmental sustainability.

"We're working with our suppliers to increase the number of digital invoices, with some of our subsidiaries now receiving 80% of all their invoices digitally," confirms Renia Beylemans. "It's a huge advantage that we can now instantly see new invoices in DocuWare as soon as they arrive, without having to wait for up to 30 days before we get them on our desks. By embracing DocuWare, we have also improved transparency and oversight into our financial position and current obligations. Plus, we can identify any potential bottlenecks in the process and plan further optimisations for our internal document and information flow."

With invoices checked, sorted, and approved faster, Hammer Group can now complete monthly and annual accounting processes much quicker, helping management to make better data-driven decisions. "Within the first six months, we've processed almost 8,500 invoices in DocuWare," adds Lisa Strutz. "Thanks to the comprehensive automation and archiving features, we no longer manually sort and file all the invoices. That's a huge time saver for us, eliminating about 26 days of time-consuming work per year. We can use that time to focus on more complex accounting tasks, and on making our processes even better."

Renia Beylemans concludes: "DocuWare has made my life much easier. I often work from home, and now I have easy access to all documents at any time, so I no longer have to ask colleagues to scan invoices from the paper archive if I need to review details at the end of the month. We're already planning our next step, moving our HR documentation and processes to DocuWare, and we're thinking about centralising our contract archive for all subsidiaries. DocuWare offers us all the flexibility we need to digitise all our document workflows."

ABOUT RICOH

Ricoh is empowering digital workplaces using innovative technologies and services that enable individuals to work smarter from anywhere. With cultivated knowledge and organisational capabilities nurtured over its 85 year history, Ricoh is a leading provider of digital services, information management, and print and imaging solutions designed to support digital transformation and optimise business performance.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh Group has major operations throughout the world and its products and services now reach customers in approximately 200 countries and regions. In the financial year ended March 2022, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 1,758 billion yen (approx. 14.5 billion USD).

For further information, please visit www.ricoh-europe.com