



Stacks Pharmacy Group Embraces SmartOffice AP Automated Accounts Payable Processing

Achieves 90 percent time-savings;
85 percent cost-savings



Stacks Pharmacy

Industry: Pharmacy

Challenge: manual accounts payable processing was a time-consuming, expensive chore which delivered inefficient management of critical supplier invoices.

Solution: SmartOffice AP

Results

- 90 percent time savings compared to manual systems
- Reduces supplier invoice processing costs by an estimated 85 percent
- Automatically 'flags' invoiced pricing that varies from agreed pricing
- Reduces manual processing of 9,000 paper invoices per month to almost nil, replacing them with digitized copies
- Automatic statement reconciliation
- Suppliers no longer send in paper invoices (or copies, if required), avoiding print, postage, and handling costs
- Full integration with Sage Accounts automatically migrates invoice data for efficient financial processing
- Always-on, secure visibility of all invoices from every supplier
- Seamless process increases AP accuracy and payment process tracking

Founded in 2000 by owner and managing director Ade Stack (MPSI), Stacks Pharmacy Group has grown exponentially. The company now incorporates eighteen pharmacy outlets located across Ireland, as well as Care Home Services, which serves the Irish nursing care sector with quality medication management services. Since its foundation, Stacks has been driven by the founder's vision of quality, friendliness, and trust — not only to the customers her pharmacies serve, but also to the suppliers with whom her organisation engages. *'On time and correct'* must apply to all areas of Stacks' business.

The Challenge — Coping with 9,000 Invoices Every Month

The timely delivery of medications and other goods to each Stacks Pharmacy outlet is crucial because customers' lives can depend on them. Historically, Stacks used a manual process to manage the mountain of invoices it received from multiple suppliers. When goods were delivered to separate Stacks' locations, they were accompanied by line-itemed invoices. Local Stacks Pharmacy employees checked the goods received against relevant invoice paperwork. Having approved the invoices, every week each store couriered that paperwork to the Stacks Dublin-based Head Office for processing and payment.

There, it was the full-time job for a single Group employee to manually sort through and process the four full boxes of invoices received every month. Each supplier invoice had to be keyed in to the Group's Sage 50c accounting software system, itself a slow and tedious process. Often, supplier invoices

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and statements could be missing. In that event, the Stacks accounts payable officer had to contact those specific suppliers to post replacement copies of the paperwork. Delayed documentation could result in late payments to suppliers, a situation Stacks Pharmacy always tried to avoid.

Monthly supplier statements would also have to be manually reconciled. Due to the significant amount of time spent on manual processing, the accounts payable officer had little time to examine specific invoices. For that reason, inadvertent overcharges could sometimes slip through.

Adding to its processing costs was the fact that all those physical paper invoices had to be stored somewhere.

“With SmartOffice AP, we save 90 percent of the time we had historically spent processing supplier invoices.”

Ade Stack, Owner & Managing Director,
Stacks Pharmacy Group

“The manual system was cumbersome,” reflects Managing Director Ade Stack. “It is very important to keep our suppliers happy by paying them on-time and within their terms because we respect their efforts, and our customers rely on their products.

“However, our manual processes could occasionally delay payments, while sometimes allowing inaccurately priced invoices to go unnoticed. I recognised that we needed a more efficient system to streamline our accounts payable process.”

The Solution: SmartOffice AP Automated Accounts Payable Processing

To resolve the company’s challenges, Stack Pharmacy Group replaced its manual supplier invoice processing workflow with SmartOffice AP. Fully integrated with the Group’s Sage 50c accounting solution, SmartOffice AP automates the entire accounts payable management process using seamless, digital online technologies.

While goods are still delivered directly to all eighteen Stacks Pharmacy outlets, suppliers now email invoices to a secure SmartOffice AP online portal specifically designed for, and allocated to, Stacks Pharmacy Group. There, the SmartOffice system ‘grabs’ each invoice and extracts all required data including supplier name, line-itemed product names and codes, pricing, and the outlet which received the goods. Digitized copies of the invoices are pushed to the relevant pharmacy outlet, or an appropriate member of the Stacks management team, for approval. Simultaneously, that data is migrated to the Group’s Sage Accounts system for financial processing and analysis.

The SmartOffice AP system automatically compares invoiced pricing with agreed pricing. Should the system notice a discrepancy, it notifies the Group managing director as well as accounts payable staff. Supplier statements are also automatically reconciled with invoices

received. Should an invoice be missing, the system prompts the accounts payable officer to ask the supplier to email the missing document.

The new SmartOffice AP solution has also resulted in additional savings by dispensing with the requirement to courier invoices from pharmacy outlets to the Group's Head Office, and to store that growing mountain of paperwork. If Group Finance needs to find a specific invoice, the SmartOffice AP online application facilitates easy document searches, while securely storing all invoices and statements for at least seven years.

Streamlining the AP Process with 24/7 Visibility

Stacks Pharmacy Group, as well as its suppliers, have benefited significantly from automated accounts payable processing. Because AP workflows are fully automated, the Group's accounts payable officer can spend more time examining pricing in detail, ensuring that invoices are accurate and that supplier payments are made within agreed terms.

The Group has reduced its physical handling of 9,000 paper invoices per month down to almost nil. Because the time-consuming chore of handling paper invoices has been reduced, the time it takes to manage accounts payable has also been reduced. Today, one member of the accounts team works part-time to manage all creditor invoices. The Group also saves on physical paperwork storage because it is no longer required.

Automated migration of accounts payable data to the Group's Sage Accounts system minimizes data entry requirements as well as the possibility of human error, while the likelihood of paying inadvertent supplier overcharges has also been reduced.

Suppliers benefit because they no longer have to post costly paper invoices, nor re-print and re-post duplicates if they are required. Too, the data and processes provided by the SmartOffice AP system ensures that as long as invoices are accurate, suppliers are paid within agreed terms — a benefit that has increased goodwill between critical suppliers and the Group.

“With SmartOffice AP, we save 90 percent of the time we had historically spent processing supplier invoices,” the Group Managing Director observes. “SmartOffice gives me the visibility I require to control my suppliers' paperwork, while allowing me to know at any moment in time what my outstanding debts are, no matter where in the world the physical invoices are located, or if they've been processed or not. The system is very easy to use: it took us five minutes to learn how to approve or query invoices, and let the supplier know if we had any concerns. Quicker resolution of any issues means we can focus on other areas of our business.

“SmartOffice enables Stacks Pharmacy Group to better serve our suppliers, and through them, our end-customers who rely on our suppliers' crucial products.”

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