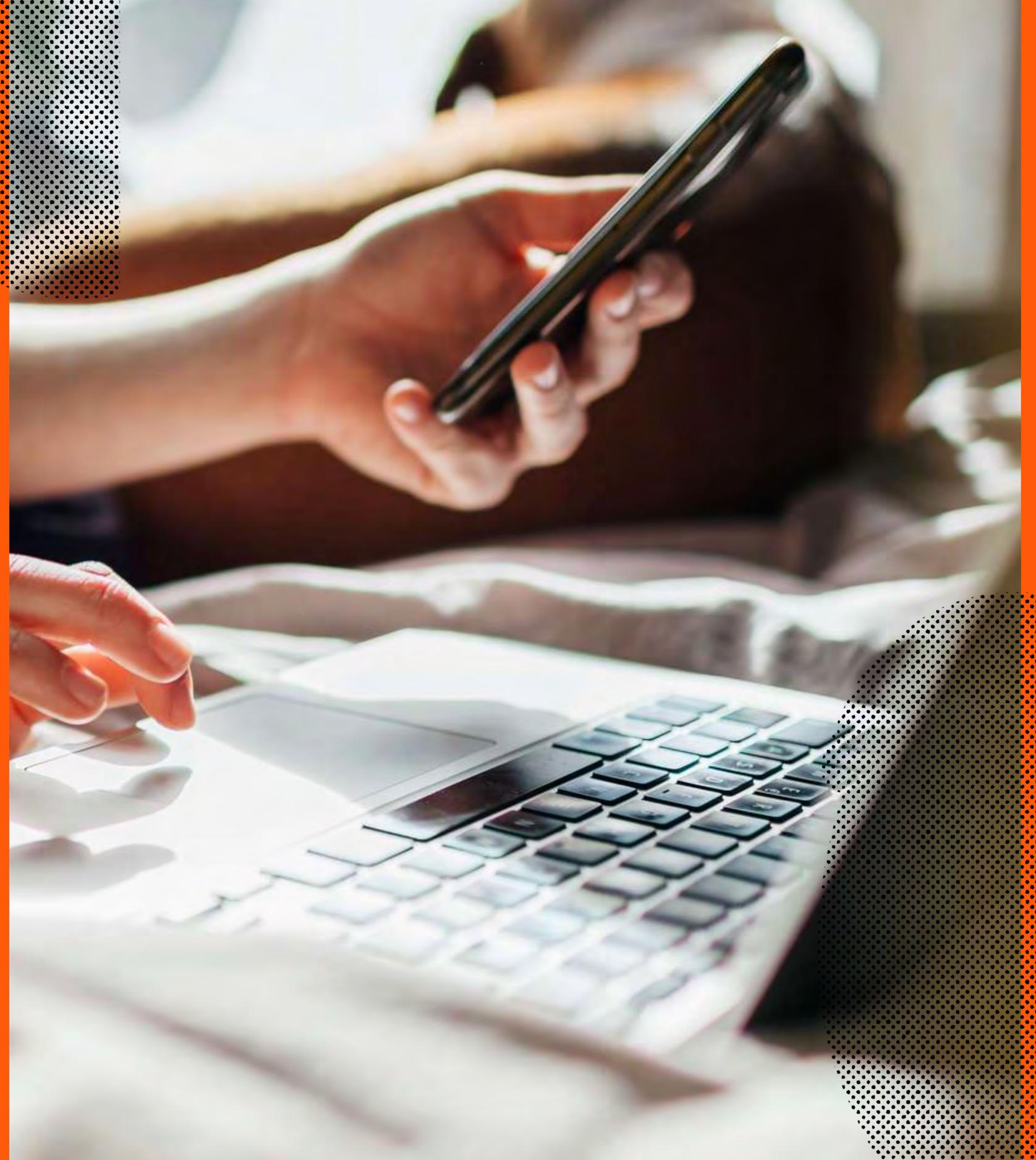




The ultimate guide to AP automation

What to look for in a modern accounts payable solution



Legacy AP challenges

Most finance managers are aware of the problems with manual AP. You spend time chasing down signatures from approvers (either physically or via email), find yourself stuck with a mountain of paperwork and mailed checks, and then have to physically dig through your files to find records of approvals if an issue arises.

Manual AP processes also leave your company vulnerable to problems like paying duplicate invoices, overpaying for products and services, and not having a full view of your cash flow.

Inefficient legacy workflows

RECEIVE INVOICE

 Bills, contracts, and other documents flood in via US mail or email

 Paper piles up. Paper-intense process.

 Tedious data entry into accounting system

ROUTE FOR APPROVAL

 Email
 Messy approval chain

Manual routing, approval delays

 Mail

Gather approvals

PAY

 Enter payments into online banking. Re-enter into accounting system.

 Print checks. Sign, stuff, and send.

RECONCILE

 Accounting system

 Bank accounts

Reconcile bank accounts with accounting system. Time-consuming exceptions.

 Audits burdened with buried documents and incomplete audit trails.

The solution

Digital workflows make all the difference. Businesses can easily automate and streamline processes that previously required manual investigations and signoffs. AI-powered software reads each invoice and enters it into the system for your review.

Then, it's automatically routed to designated approvers based on your custom rules, roles, and permissions. Approvers can evaluate accompanying documentation, view comments from other approvers, request additional information to append to the payment request, and approve or reject the payment.

The original invoice, approvals, and comments are all logged to create a comprehensive audit trail, saving your team time and hassle down the road.

Streamlined AP solution



Capture

Receive bills directly via online inbox

Approve

View and approve bills online from any device

Pay

Enable ePayments and simply click "PAY"

Reconcile

Automatic sync with accounting system

How to streamline your AP automation

AP automation helps solve many of the problems of a manual AP process, saving time and reducing errors.

The problem

Sound familiar?

The solution



Manual errors

Human errors created by manual data entry result in payment errors and reconciliation headaches down the road.

An automated invoice process significantly reduces errors in payment amounts. Plus, it syncs with your accounting software to eliminate errors from having to enter the same information twice.



Potential fraud

External bad actors may send fraudulent invoices, and even financially stressed or disgruntled employees may try to use a lack of oversight for financial gain.

A formal, automated approval process enforces separation of duties and helps reduce fraud.



Paper-based processes

Reliance on paper and lack of organization can make it hard to revisit past payments and find information after the fact. Many companies still use filing cabinets to maintain their AP records.

All AP information resides in one digital location with a detailed audit trail. Easily investigate past invoices, payments, and vendors, or give auditors read-only access for improved transparency.



Cash flow

Missed payment deadlines and late fees, or not taking advantage of early discounts, can adversely impact your cash flow.

Optimize your payments with improved visibility. Take full advantage of any early payment discounts, or hold payment based on upcoming cash needs.

How to streamline your AP automation

The problem

Sound familiar?

The solution



Email vulnerabilities

Using email for approvals opens the door to email scams or leaked data from an inadvertent forward.

Automated, cloud-based approval workflows speed up the approval process from start to finish within a secure system.



Inflexibility for remote work

Paper processes require your AP team to visit the office to sign paperwork, mail checks, and investigate past payments. This makes it difficult to allow remote work in the case of quarantining or illness.

Digital workflows generate automatic notifications when a new bill is ready for review. Users can review and approve bills electronically from any device, including their phone.



Mismatched data

Your accounting software shows one balance, but your bank account shows another due to the lack of communication between the two systems.

Integrating your digital payment workflows with your accounting software means that your information is up-to-date in both systems.



Changes to vendor info

A vendor changes their banking or contact information, and you make the change in your accounting software. But this never transfers to your AP software and your check is sent to the wrong place.

Two-way sync with your accounting software ensures vendor contact information is updated regardless of the system in which the change is made.

Questions to ask about your current process

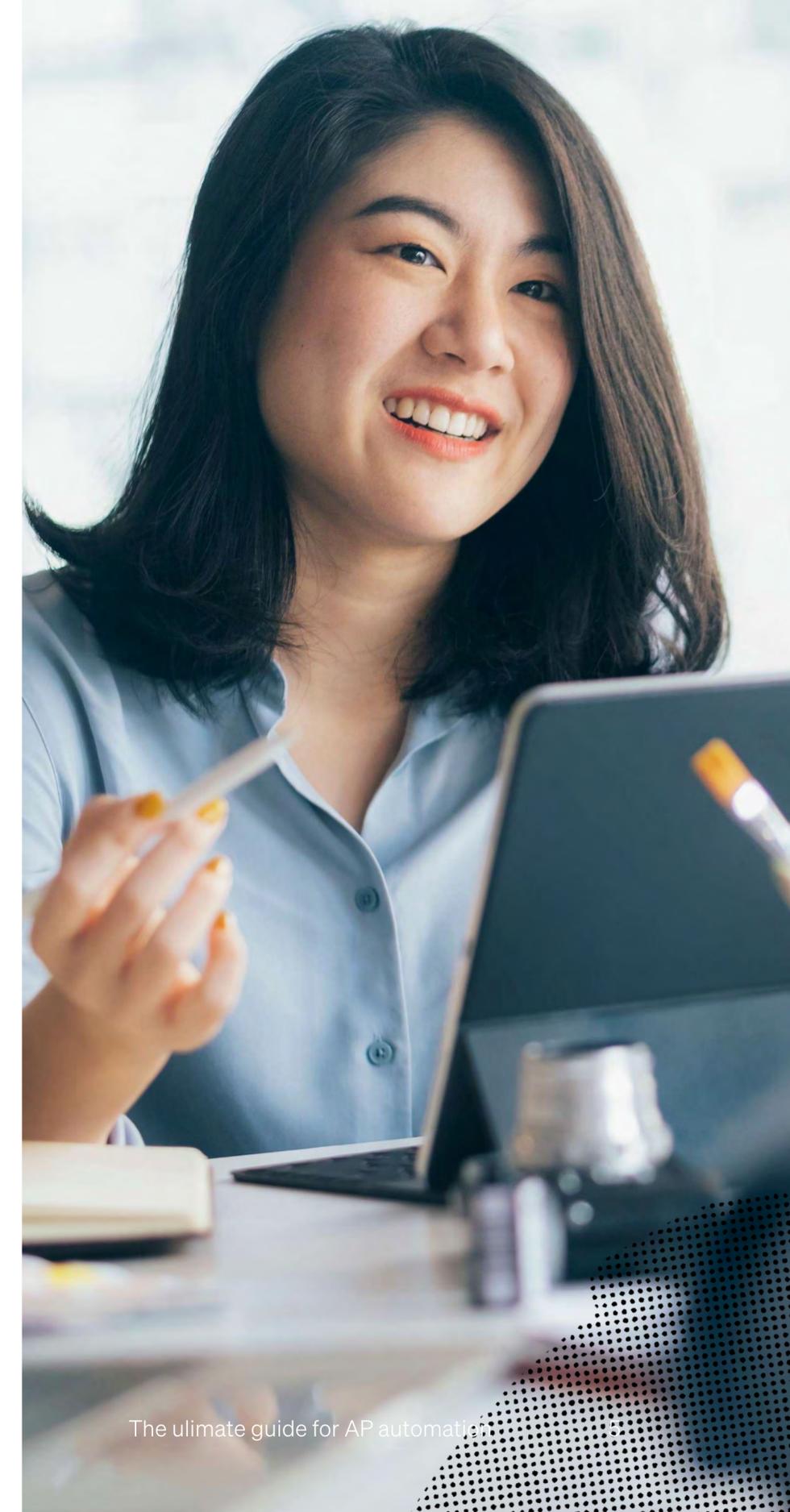
To evaluate the efficiency of your current process, think about each of the following questions:

Process

- How do your invoices arrive? By mail? Email? Something else?
- Do you have a single workflow for every invoice, no matter how it arrives?
- How is invoice data entered into your accounting system?

Time

- How long does it take to make a payment after approvals are in place?
- How long do you spend each month waiting for checks to clear?
- How much time does that cost your team each month?



Approvals

- Are there different approval processes based on the type of bill, vendor, or payment amount?
- How do approvals move from person to person? Is it a manual process, requiring a person to route paper copies or email the next approver?
- Do approvers get access to supporting documents to make their decisions?

Exceptions

- How does your business classify exceptions?
- How would you manage and/or remediate exceptions?
- What steps must a user take to retrieve approvals and documents for a payment exception?

Audit trails

- What details of the approvals, invoices, and payments are stored?
- What process is used to retrieve approval trails after payments are made?
- How do you reconcile payments between your bank account and accounting software?



Things you should look for in an AP solution

Evaluate any potential AP automation solution for each of the following:

-  **Customizability**
Every company is unique, so you need to be able to tailor approval workflows for different use cases. Within the workflow, there should be options to set custom roles or to leverage standard roles within the solution.
-  **Speed**
From start to finish, your AP solution should speed up invoice capture, approvals, and payment processing. Run timed tests of any AP solution you demo to see how quickly each step is handled.
-  **Security**
Ensure that your AP solution includes security features like 2-step verification and SSL encryption. This helps keep your company and vendor data secure.
-  **Integration**
Your AP solution should be able to integrate with your accounting software or ERP so you gain an up-to-date overview of your organization's finances. Most advanced AP solutions offer an automatic sync for major accounting software, such as Oracle NetSuite, QuickBooks, Sage Intacct, and Microsoft Dynamics, or an option that allows you to easily exchange data between systems.
-  **Ease of use**
AP software should be intuitive and easy to use so employees can quickly understand roles and processes. Take a demo of the software you're exploring to ensure it's easy to learn for everyone on your team.
-  **Mobile apps**
Every modern AP solution should come with a mobile app so executives and other employees can approve payments anytime, anywhere. This is especially important for businesses that have many employees working remotely or traveling.
-  **Workflow modification**
As your business needs change and new hires are added, you may want to adjust your workflows. Ensure your AP solution gives you the option to bulk replace approvers, so you can seamlessly transition responsibilities to your new hires.
-  **Audit trails**
Business leaders and external stakeholders may want documentation to improve the effectiveness of their payment process. Ensure that your AP solution keeps complete and detailed documentation to simplify future audits and inquiries.

AP automation terms

As you explore the possibilities that AP automation provides, these terms may come up. This quick glossary provides a helpful definition of each term and why it matters for your company.

Audit trails /aw-dit treyls/ n.

Audit trails capture and time stamp every touchpoint, communication, and action that occurs in the system from the time an invoice is received to the time payment is sent. This makes it easy to investigate past payments and conduct both internal and external audits.

Custom roles /kuhs-tuhm rohls/ n.

Custom roles let you create your own user roles with your own set of permissions. If your company is more complex, you may need to go beyond standard roles and create custom ones. Administrators should be able to define custom roles and permissions to meet your unique needs.

Document management /dok-yuh-muhnt man-ij-muhnt/ n.

Document management includes storing, managing, and retrieving approvals, payment information, invoices, and even vendor contracts to expedite responses to inquiries. Ideally, your AP automation solution should provide cloud-based management for all AP-related documentation, storing it with the underlying invoice or vendor for easy retrieval.

Dual control /doo-uhl kuhn-trohl/ n.

Dual control provides extra security and control by requiring at least two people to approve key actions, such as changing company or bank account information, or altering employee permissions. When dual control is enabled, a single user can initiate an action, but at least one other user is required to approve it.

Internal controls /in-tur-nl kuhn-trohls/ n.

Internal controls is the process of setting up specific rules to determine what approvals are needed under what circumstances. For example, a monthly utility bill might be approved automatically as long as it's below a certain threshold, whereas new vendor contracts of more than \$50,000 might need approval at the executive level.

PO matching /pee-oh mäch-ing/ n.

This is the process of comparing the original purchase order (PO) with an invoice for specific products and services. This process allows your finance department to verify that the company is paying an invoice that has already been pre-authorized, and that the final amount matches the initial estimate.

Reconciliation /rek-uhn-sil-ee-ey-shuhn/ n.

Reconciliation is the process of confirming that two sets of records (usually the balances of two accounts) match. Reconciliation is used to ensure that there aren't any discrepancies between the payment amounts in your accounts. This is done by making sure the balances match at the end of a particular accounting period.

Separation of duties /sep-uh-rey-shuhn uhv doo-tees/ n.

Separation of duties helps to prevent fraud, theft, and other security compromises by requiring at least two approvers for each step of a finance process. This also ensures that no single employee can make a payment without approval, as one or more employees approve the bill, and another initiates the payment.

Standard roles /stan-derd rohls/ n.

Standard roles are built-in roles that come with some AP automation solutions. Their predefined permissions make sense for most companies, controlling what different types of users can see or do. This makes it quick and easy to apply that solution straight "out of the box."

The benefits of BILL



Paperless

The largest inefficiency in the AP process is the reliance on paper and manual processes. You can save time and reduce clutter by moving to a digital process. Receive emailed invoices in your BILL inbox, or upload images of paper bills. BILL uses artificial intelligence to code the bill in real-time. It automatically captures the required data from any invoice and starts the bill creation process when an invoice is received. No more filing papers, licking stamps, or mailing checks. Everything can be handled digitally.

- Get rid of filing cabinets, mailed checks, and paper documentation
- Reduce time and frustration finding invoices, remittance, and payment information
- Leverage full audit trails and cleared check images without digging through filing cabinets



Automated

With BILL, you can easily set up approval routing with customizable rules and processes. The approvers for each workflow are automatically notified to review and approve the bill, eliminating email chains and chasing down signatures on paper. This helps your team operate efficiently even if they're outside the office. Any communication between finance personnel and approvers are also timestamped and logged to support future audits or inquiries.

- Save your staff time chasing down approvers by email or chat via automated reminders
- Streamline approvals and communications throughout the entire bill approval and payment process
- Keep your accounting system and BILL up to date with automatic sync or easy data transfer between systems





Secure

BILL dramatically reduces the contact points that create opportunities for human error and security failures. With an automated system, you can make payments via domestic ACH, international wire, virtual card, or check payments, all without exposing sensitive routing and banking information. Optional 2-step verification helps strengthen security, and administrators can control system access through role-based permissions.

- Reduce the risk of accidentally forwarding sensitive information via email
- Minimize the risk of internal fraud by implementing dual control, so that no single employee can make critical changes, such as modifying company or vendor bank account information
- Have peace of mind that BILL is SOC 1 and SOC 2 Type II compliant and utilizes PCI-certified vendors for credit card payments

*Based on a 2019 survey of over 800 BILL customers



Efficient

AP automation helps streamline your entire payments process. BILL customers report saving 36 days on average annually, which can help their AP teams* focus on big-picture items rather than getting bogged down in day-to-day tasks. We surveyed 2,000 of our customers in May 2021 and found that:

- 77% of customers surveyed find BILL at least 2X faster than other AP methods
- Surveyed BILL customers report saving, on average, 50% of time on accounts payable
- 70% of customers surveyed say BILL provided the biggest efficiency improvement their team realized in the last year





Simplify AP with end-to-end automation

BILL can help you save time, reduce stress,
and streamline processes.

REQUEST DEMO

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