INVU:

Apex Lifts

Full visibility & control

As a proud Royal Warrant holder, Apex Lifts required a solution which would help retain the high standard of customer service. Additionally, the finance team needed more visibility and control over invoices and other documentation entering the business.

INVU:

Apex Lifts

Accounts Payable | Document Management | Web Approval
- Integration with Sage 200 -

Established over four decades ago Apex Lifts is an independent and family run lift manufacturing and servicing company based in Kent.

Introduction

As London's largest independent lift manufacturing and servicing providers Apex Lifts pride themselves on being at the cutting edge of industry developments - always striving to further improve quality standards and customer service.

Apex Lifts is proud to be a Royal Warrant Holder, a prestigious accolade awarded in recognition of the organisations regular supply of goods and services to HM The Queen. Today, Apex Lifts continues to service and manage lifts at Windsor Castle.

It was essential that these high standards continued, therefore it was recognised there would be substantial efficiencies to be gained with the introduction of a new Accounts Payable solution.

In 2014, shortly after Kevin Warnock, Finance Director, joined the company Apex Lifts implemented the Invu Accounts Payable solution, alongside Invu Document Management, to help bring visibility and control to the company's invoice processing.

"We are very pleased with the Invu system, it does exactly what we need it to do."

Kevin Warnock,
Finance Director

Solution Summary

▸ Seamless integration with Sage 200

▸ Automatic routing of invoices for approval

▸ Full visibility of documents throughout the process with customisable reporting

▸ Invoice approval on mobile devices

▸ Reduction in physical storage

APEX LIFTS
a CAPITAL success | since 1970

Proud to partner with:

sage | Developer

Microsoft Partner
Gold Independent Software Vendor (ISV)

ABBYY Europe
Gold Certified Partner

Past processes

Prior to implementing the Invu Accounts Payable solution Apex Lifts' processes were very manual and involved a lot of paper being circulated around the business for approval. Kevin Warnock, explains, *"Invoices would often go "missing", it was clear there was an issue with recording and finding purchase invoices within the business."* Purchase invoices were filed using a Sage generated unique reference number, rather than alphabetically, which proved difficult when it came to finding invoices should any supplier queries arise.

Kevin explains, *"To find an invoice we would need to go to the purchase ledger to find out the unique reference number, we would then have to find the filing cabinet and search for the invoice. It was laborious and a completely inefficient way of working."* Problems also arose when staff members who approved invoices were out of the office, *"There were delays in invoice approvals if people were not in the office and invoices would soon pile up on desks. We had no visibility of where invoices were in the approval system which created problems when suppliers chased for payments"* Kevin adds.

Prior to Invu Apex Lifts were storing their invoices and other documentation in loft space, which brought its own problems. *"The problem with storing the documents in a loft space was similar to someone's loft at home. Invoices were placed there with the intention of it only being stored for the statutory period of time. Once stored there nobody had the time or inclination to throw out what was not needed. In the end we used up all the loft space storing 20 years of purchase invoices unnecessarily."*

Meeting the criteria

For Apex Lifts there were a number of key issues involving their processes which needed to be resolved. The business required a solution which would automate both their invoice capture and other paper based processes. It was also important that the chosen solution integrated with their existing systems, which included Sage, Pegasus 3 and Liftdata.

Issues with the efficiency of the purchase ledger process as well as the visibility of invoices and the controls of spending were key concerns for Kevin. Like most companies Apex Lifts had an invoice approval system based on individual invoice value and the type of expenditure. However, Kevin's concern was that with a paper based system, there was no easy way to confirm that invoices followed the correct approval path before payment. *"Capital expenditure and IT costs needed to be approved by certain directors. With a manual system the only way of being sure that the correct approval was followed was to physically find the invoice and see who signed it."* Kevin added.

With a proposed change of location there was a need to remove the boxes of invoices and documents that had built up over the years, as there wasn't any space at the new building allocated to store them. Apex took on two temporary staff to sort through the paper archives and scan those documents which need to be retained into Invu. This meant that very few documents were physically moved to the new premises as they had been stored and archived electronically.

"With a manual system the only way of being sure that the correct approval was followed was to physically find the invoice and see who signed it."

Apex Lifts, Kent

Sourcing the right vendor

When Kevin and his team decided to investigate an appropriate solution, Kevin drew upon his past experiences. Having already used Invu in his previous role he felt confident the Invu solution would meet Apex Lifts requirements. Kevin needed a solution which was proven and which would work seamlessly with his accounting software. *"We looked at other solutions but there were question marks over some parts of the functionality. I wanted to be sure that the software that we used would do everything we required and that we would not have to pay for enhancements because we lacked understanding of the functionality in the beginning"* Kevin explains.

"Invoices would often go "missing", it was clear there was an issue with recording and finding purchase invoices within the business."

Kevin along with the management team were heavily involved in the whole process, from the initial decision through to completion.

Apex Lifts did look at other vendors but found they could only meet some of the listed requirements. Kevin knew that the Invu solution worked, *"I knew the company (Invu) who installed it were good and I knew it worked well with Sage 200. In my view it was a straight-forward decision"* Kevin notes.

Despite Kevin and his team having a tight deadline, the solution went live within 3 months, in time for the start of the new financial year. *"We knew time was a premium, we had holidays booked and there was a lot of preparation work to do. On reflection it went in very well. The Invu support team were very quick to resolve any teething issues."* Kevin Warnock, Financial Director.

Improved processes

Since implementing the Invu solution Apex Lifts are now able to process and approve invoices via a customised workflow. The approval process allows our supervisors to approve invoices up to a pre set limit, after which they are passed to more senior managers. This has improved controls over expenditure. Kevin explains, *"I like the idea of being able to see all the purchase invoices if I choose to do so. I can quickly get a picture of our creditor position, with a manual process this simply isn't possible."* Before implementing Invu Kevin relied on the purchase ledger clerk to follow the invoice authorisation process, passing high value invoices to directors to approve. As this was a manual process it left Kevin wondering if the process was followed all of the time, *"With a manual system you really have no idea if all the invoices are correctly approved or if some bypass the approval process for some reason. With Invu you can easily track and check every invoice as it flows through the approval process."* Kevin adds.

"We looked at other solutions but there were question marks over some parts of the functionality. I wanted to be sure that the software that we used would do everything we required and that we would not have to pay for enhancements because we lacked understanding of the functionality in the beginning."

Apex Lifts process around 12,000 purchase invoices a year. Previously when supervisors were away from the office there was "down time" meaning invoices piled up on individual's desks and the approval process would grind to a halt. Invu's Web Approval module has allowed those who are away from the office to authorise invoices on the move, often whilst travelling on a train, making better use of their time and speeding up the P2P process.

Apex Lifts no longer have boxes of invoices and other documentation stored in the loft or elsewhere in the organisation, as the Invu Document Management solution has provided the company with secure and easy to access to documents. Previously, Apex Lifts scanned all purchase and cash book invoices that they were required to keep a record of for HMRC purposes, these are now available to search via Invu Document Management.

As part of the standard Invu set up, a table of users, authorisers and their value limits for authorisation was created and is maintained by Apex Lifts, providing internal control. Once invoices have been scanned in or sent to Invu and have been coded, the workflow will check the authorisation limit to see if any limits have been exceeded, when this occurs invoices are routed for further value authorisation. The whole process is fully audited and a copy of the invoice is automatically sent to the Invu Document Management system. Purchase invoice images can also be obtained by drilling down through the Sage 200 nominal ledger.

Additionally, Apex Lifts are now able to access reports that enable management to see precisely what invoices are outstanding, where they are in the process and how long they have been there. This means Apex Lifts are able to establish much higher levels of control and visibility of the finance process within the business.

"With a manual system you really have no idea if all the invoices are correctly approved. With Invu you can easily track and check every invoice as it flows through the approval process."

Benefits - The sky's the limit

Since implementing the solution Kevin and his team have seen numerous benefits, including:

- ▸ Seamless Integration with sage 200 to reduce duplication of effort

- ▸ Automatic routing of invoices for approval and where required to allow user to code based on their area of responsibility

- ▸ Full visibility of documents throughout the process with customisable reporting

- ▸ Improved accuracy and speed of processing

- ▸ Reduction in physical storage requirements as documents are stored electronically

- ▸ Invoice approval on mobile devices

Apex Lifts, Kent

The time spent on the purchase ledger process has been dramatically reduced and there is now less frustration, greater visibility and control. Kevin explains, *"We can trace all the documents, we know where they are in the authorisation process and we know where the hold ups are."*

Invoices no longer go missing and there is no need to print out emails, copy them and then file away manually. *"The whole process has been speeded up and is much more efficient. We have a picture of what our creditor position looks like at any point,"* Kevin adds.

From a search point of view Apex Lifts have seen the advantages of having a Document Management system. Invu's search capability has enabled the company to find documents at a touch of button.

With Invu Kevin knows that all invoices have been through the correct approval process before they have been paid. However, as Kevin points out, *"It's not just about approving invoices, it's about how we operate as a business. As a result of Invu I am able to ask questions and where necessary, challenge our managers because I have full visibility of costs. With a manual system there was a chance that invoices could get approved when they shouldn't have been and the costs weren't questioned when they perhaps should have been."*

> *"Implementation, training and support is first class!"*

The whole team were trained on the solution at the very beginning and although there is little need to raise support issues, Apex Lifts know the Invu Support team is on hand should they require any technical help. Kevin explains, *"Whenever we have had an issue it has always been solved very quickly by the Invu Support Team. In my opinion they are very good."*

Keeping it simple

Although Apex Lifts had some minor issues at the implementation stage Kevin suggests these issues were a result of making the authorisation process over complicated. *"I found I was having to authorise the same invoice three or four times because of a glitch in the approval matrix."* With help from the Invu Professional Services team a solution which satisfied their requirements was found and the process was simplified. *"My advice would be to keep the process simple, don't try and be too clever and over complicate the workflow. Once the approval process was amended, the implementation was straight forward and now I never hear of problems about Invu."*

Future plans

Apex Lifts continue to explore the potential efficiencies that other Invu solutions could bring to the business, *"I like the POP system (Invu Purchasing) and I think there are some efficiencies which we could gain from the solution."* Kevin adds that the current Invu Accounts Payable and Document Management solution has met all of their expectations and has provided the business with a compelling end to end solution for managing their invoice process. *"We are very pleased with the Invu system, it does exactly what we need it to do."*

> *"I like the idea of being able to see all the purchase invoices if I choose to do so. I can quickly get a picture of our creditor position, with a manual process this simply isn't possible."*

invu: