

Three AP Automation Takeaways From Shared Services Outsourcing Week

This year at Shared Services Outsourcing Week (SSOW), the world's largest shared services event, Direct Commerce spoke with dozens of the world's largest enterprises about their AP Automation needs and the trends surrounding financial transformation.

New technologies like generative AI certainly created conference buzz, but after 10 years attending the event and meeting hundreds of large enterprises, this year more than ever we found that in AP Automation, despite the promise of new technology, our conversations kept coming back to the same core fundamentals of successful accounts payable transformation that enable success and measurable ROI. Here are our three key takeaways from Shared Service Outsourcing Week.

1 **New technology is not a magic bullet: the first step in successful enterprise AP process transformation requires a deep understanding of your business process.**

Yes, new technologies like generative AI will enable remarkable enterprise process scalability. But for the many large enterprises that are transforming their AP processes for the first time (or upleveling current platforms), we cannot emphasize enough that the most critical first step in your AP Automation buying journey is to develop a deep understanding of your AP business process. This understanding will enable you not only to buy the best solution in the market but also ensure that your purchase aligns with your actual business needs.

How can you align key stakeholders from across your organization (Accounting, Strategic Finance, Purchasing, IT, etc.) to develop internal consensus? How do you build a holistic understanding of what you need to solve, including what your enterprise does well and its inefficiencies? Can you define your KPIs? Can you sort through new technologies to find the ones that truly accomplish your business needs without being swayed by trends that don't currently meet your objectives?

At Direct Commerce, we work closely with current and prospective customers to map AP processes and identify risk and opportunity as the first step. Only then do we discuss how deploying and applying our SaaS AP Automation solutions will drive value. Having a partner with 23 years of expertise in AP Automation processes like Direct Commerce will ultimately enable your enterprise to deploy efficient systems that drive significant value over time both internally and for your suppliers.

2 Your change management strategy can make or break your ROI.

At SSOW, there were multiple conversations both in the Bootcamps and the Interactive Discussion Groups that directly addressed the importance of organizational agility and deployment best practices for AP Automation. We agree, but we'd like to take that one step further: achieving positive ROI on any new enterprise AP Automation deployment hinges directly on whether your team and your suppliers use it.

Believe it or not, over 23 years we've seen far too many enterprises invest millions in AP Automation only to achieve fractional usage – both internally and externally – before they come to us. If your enterprise wants to transform, understanding new technology and its benefits is not enough. You also need to understand what end users are striving to accomplish on a daily basis, what will motivate them to utilize a new system, and the best training and onboarding processes to meet those goals.

Most AP Automation solution providers won't be able to help you with change management because they lack the expertise. Find a provider like Direct Commerce: our industry-defining change management results are built on proven strategies and an AP change management roadmap that consistently exceeds our customers' expectations.

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3 The most advanced enterprise AP teams consider downstream process and supplier issues like variance management and dispute resolution, and are seeking to eliminate those issues during initial implementation.

Invoice capture simply isn't enough to elevate your enterprise AP process. It's critical, but it won't eliminate data errors, mismatches, and time-consuming supplier communication that monopolizes critical AP resources. Contrary to several years ago when AP Automation deployment was viewed and deployed sequentially starting with invoice capture, today's holistic approach to a new or upleveled AP Automation system must account for the entire invoice lifecycle and all the data inputs necessary for creating compliant, efficient processes and supplier satisfaction. Advanced enterprise AP leaders are seeking solutions that identify invoice capture errors, solve 3-way mismatches (or 4-way and beyond), eliminate supplier data inconsistencies, and reduce the time consuming back-and-forth that often characterizes supplier communication with these issues. True automation, like Direct Commerce Variance Management and Dispute Resolution, addresses the full invoice lifecycle beyond just invoice capture, eliminating manual interventions on invoice variances and supplier disputes.

About Direct Commerce

At Direct Commerce, we thrive among enterprise professionals like those we met at SSOW – AP leaders who embrace innovation but also know that they must begin with the best practices that underpin measurable ROI in AP Automation. Direct Commerce provides AP Automation SaaS solutions to the world's largest enterprises. We transform the entire AP Automation process, from ERP integration and invoice capture to variance management and dispute resolution to supplier change management.

Continue the conversation with us. The world of AP Automation is changing quickly, and at Direct Commerce, we're helping large enterprises advance with confidence. To understand and deploy your best AP Automation solution, email us today at info@directcommerce.com.



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