

CASE STUDY



Arrow Lets the Data Flow with Automated Procurement Processes.

Arrow sought to help its customers create innovative new products, but found that manual quote and invoice processes were preventing it from achieving this objective. By implementing Kofax RPA™, Arrow achieved better integration with suppliers, shortened cycle times, assured data accuracy and increased satisfaction levels for customers and employees.

3 minutes
CUT FROM ORDER
PROCESSING WORKFLOW

100s
OF PERSON-HOURS
SAVED PER MONTH

Enhances
SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS

Work Like Tomorrow.™

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ABOUT ARROW ELECTRONICS

WWW.ARROWECS.AT

Arrow Electronics is a global provider of products, services and solutions to industrial and commercial users. Located in Neu-Isenburg, Germany, Arrow is a supply channel partner for more than 100,000 original equipment manufacturers, contract manufacturers and commercial customers through a global network of more than 460 locations in 58 countries.

PRODUCTS IN USE

Kofax RPA™

FOCUS

Digital Transformation, Invoice Processing

CHALLENGE

For more than 75 years, Arrow has been helping customers around the world innovate in many industries with its bespoke electronic products. The company's engineers work closely with customers throughout the entire product lifecycle, from the initial idea through all stages of development. Arrow's EMEA Components product management team plays a vital role in this process, helping customers determine the components and related costs for innovative new solutions.

As company specialists in product marketing and procurement, the product management team prepares hundreds of custom proposals per partner, per week. The preparation process was mostly manual—special quotes simply didn't work with Arrow's existing B2B processes and interfaces, such as EDI and RosettaNet, because these are non-standard requests. To find the best source for a particular component, the product asset specialists asked multiple suppliers for quotes.

“We expect to save hundreds of hours per month of manual work to process special quotes and invoices—with shorter cycle times, data accuracy and increased customer and employee satisfaction.”

Wolfgang Fischer, Senior Division Manager eCommerce, Arrow Central Europe Components

However, the process steps were often repetitive across suppliers. Most requests required the same information to be provided to each partner, but via different methods—email, PDF or web portal. Offers from suppliers were also returned in varying media formats, which had to be manually incorporated into the proposal. Handling invoices was a similar situation: the process was manually intensive and included repetitive data entry. This process was not ideal for a company seeking to process several hundred proposals per day.

SOLUTION

Arrow decided to deploy Kofax RPA™ within its components organization in Central Europe, attracted to its quick and easy implementation process. With Kofax RPA best practices as a guide, Arrow was able to implement Kofax RPA—avoiding an expensive IT project, a long chain of approvals and having to wait many months or more.

The workflow automation capabilities were another key advantage. In a fast and uncomplicated POC (proof of concept), Kofax RPA integrated easily with Arrow's existing middleware. The solution proved itself to be unique in the market, as it could automate manual tasks that standard integration tools could not—such as the process of logging into a web portal, using credentials to request a quote and evaluating the response delivered via email.

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Furthermore, Kofax RPA's synthetic APIs interface perfectly with Arrow's existing B2B infrastructure, so no special coding, integration or assistance from IT was needed. Kofax RPA's automated workflows mimic what users had to do manually to request and process quotes and invoices, regardless of format or location.

RESULTS

Arrow opted to implement Kofax RPA supplier by supplier. Because the first several workflow automations produced outstanding results, the improvements were noticed enterprise-wide. Overall, the company estimates it reduced manual effort by three minutes per order. That translates into hundreds of hours per month saved for Arrow's Components unit in Central Europe. On a global level, the business impact is likely to escalate, because Arrow has thousands of suppliers worldwide.

The company said the benefits of using Kofax RPA are far more valuable to Arrow than just saving time. Now, product asset specialists can spend their time working more closely with customers to help advise them on component options, as well as build stronger relationships with suppliers and do more negotiation. Cut-and-paste errors have been eliminated while faster invoice payments may yield more savings by way of qualifying for special discounts.

Although replacing a significant part of Arrow's special quote and invoice processes was considered "unthinkable" before, automation through Kofax RPA has been a success. According to the company, taking advantage of templates and frameworks has not only helped simplify and speed implementation times, but has also established a strong foundation and best practices for the global rollout.

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