

### THE BACKGROUND

When Air France went live in Paris with a new SAP enterprise software solution last year, the international carrier's U.S. headquarters office in New York ran squarely into the Law of Unintended Consequences. The new enterprise software in France would not talk properly to the accounts payable software in the United States.

One of the world's leading airlines, Air France is third worldwide in international passenger transport and fourth in international air freight. The company operates more than 1,700 daily flights to some 200 destinations in 85 countries, utilizing a fleet of more than 250 aircraft. Its employee force exceeds 49,000, with more than 800 of them located in the United States.

### THE PROBLEM

Air France's New York office is networked "live" with the new enterprise software but that didn't help Isabel Monteiro, accounts payable and accounts receivable manager. The SAP software housed the accounting data and it was not compatible with PayBase 16, the Bottomline Technologies payment processing solution that had been in place in New York for several years. Moreover, PayBase 16 was being discontinued and would no longer be supported.

Even upgrading to PayBase 32, Bottomline's successor program, would have involved writing additional software to make the Bottomline solution compatible with SAP. Further, neither the old nor the new Bottomline solutions could print directly from the accounting application since, among other things, it did not accommodate signature separations for check amount levels. Air France policy calls for automated signatures for amounts from \$0.00 to \$4,999.00, one manual signature for amounts from \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00, and two manual signatures plus supporting documentation for amounts over \$10,000.00. To Monteiro, the combination of an expensive software upgrade and the cost of further customization was prohibitive.

### THE SOLUTION

As the SAP solution neared the cut-over date in summer 2001, Monteiro called her Xerox representative, Colleen Tripp, to discuss obtaining a new MICR laser printer. Tripp introduced her to the 21 page-per-minute Xerox DocuPrint 2125 MICR-enhanced laser printer solution from ACOM and then, learning of Air France's broader check-printing problem, she suggested that Monteiro explore the extended payment solutions available from ACOM Solutions, Inc.

ACOM is a Xerox XTRA Partner and the company chosen by Xerox to MICR-engineer its line of network printers.

"We looked at ACOM's EZCheck solution and several other solutions," Monteiro said. "Besides basic check printing, we wanted automated signature capability, positive security, sorting by dollar amount, and the ability to generate reports for each amount category independently. Most of the solutions we looked at were lacking one thing or another, but Bottomline and ACOM had all of the features we needed. The final decision was based on three things: EZChecks' out-of-the box compatibility with SAP, its comprehensive security, and the important fact that it was far easier to understand and to use. Personnel costs are very high in New York and EZCheck's operational simplicity allows us to assign less advanced computer skill employees to the payment process."

EZCheck is a 32-bit MICR laser payment solution that streamlines check disbursements. Running on a Microsoft Windows NT server, EZCheck merges payment data from business management software (such as SAP) with secure electronic check forms, and spools the data file to a MICR laser printer situated anywhere on the company network (even in remote locations). Blank security-check stock is loaded into the MICR laser printer, and complete formatted checks are generated in a single pass through the MICR laser printer.

ACOM's turnkey solution comes with:

- MICR check-printing software
- A Xerox Network Laser Printer, MICR-enhanced by ACOM
- A substantial starter supply of MICR toner and blank security-check stock

It also comes with double guarantees: a unique, industry-leading no-risk total satisfaction guarantee, and another which guarantees that its MICR quality and performance meet or exceed ABA and ANSI standards.

### THE IMPLEMENTATION

Monteiro provided ACOM with the text file of a form generated by Paris headquarters for use with the SAP software there. Using that file, ACOM Implementation Specialist Veronica Montoya set up the single accounts payable bank account from which the New York office pays its 2,500-3,000 bills each month, along with the interface between EZCheck and SAP.

“The process was very easy and uncomplicated,” Monteiro says. “No on-site visit was necessary. Everything was handled very well over the telephone. Although ACOM is on the west coast and we are on the east coast, communications were excellent. If we had questions outside ACOM’s business hours, we simply left message and were contacted very quickly.”

Once the implemented software was received, she says, Montoya spent about an hour on the telephone confirming that everything worked properly, then another two or three hours training the staff.

“That illustrates how easy it is to use,” Monteiro says.

For check fraud intervention, Air France uses a match-file program developed internally prior to obtaining EZCheck. EZCheck continues to play a role in the process, but it’s a reverse role. Where usually the “match-file” would be sent directly to the bank from the ACOM software, in the Air France application, EZCheck relays the file to Excel as a text file, which then goes to SAP, where it is formatted to bank specifications and transmitted.

“Positive pay software is important to us,” Monteiro says. “We have experienced some check fraud attempts.”

## SUCCESS!

Monteiro wouldn’t change a thing, she says. The checks print fast and there are almost no jams during the printing process. There are plenty of reports available and once the file has been transferred to EZCheck, the entire job -- checks and reports -- is completed in about 15 minutes.

And, of course, nothing is lost in translation.

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