

THE BACKGROUND

Relizon's accounts payable department historically paid its thousands of monthly bills using tractor-fed, pre-printed, numbered check stock. The information technology (IT) department generated the checks and then forwarded them to accounts payable for bursting, decollating and signature. Once those steps were completed, the checks were manually stuffed for mailing. When IT was in crunch mode, says Accounts Payable Supervisor Mary Jo Will, check runs were sometimes delayed, straining the 3:30 p.m. mailing deadline.

THE SOLUTION

Relizon sought a more efficient, more secure check-processing solution, and while Will and members of her department were evaluating desktop laser check processing, they learned of ACOM's EZCheck for Windows Total Check Processing Solution (formerly known as QuickCheck).

"ACOM recently had become a Relizon business partner and we felt that we should look at the solution," Will says. "We found that it suited our requirements very well."

Instead of using pre-printed checks, the ACOM solution uses electronic check formats, which are stored in the software with all company information, graphics, MICR line, signature(s) and remittance information. Relizon's financial data, including payee and remittance information, is stored and managed on a legacy database.

When a check run is scheduled, the EZCheck software merges payables data from the database with the respective check template and spools the file out to the MICR-laser printer. The complete, signed checks are produced in a single pass on blank safety-check stock. Check data can be recalled by various criteria, such as account, date, and even individual payee.

"We liked the fact that EZCheck runs on a PC and that the software has extensive password protection," Will says. "It also offered significant convenience features. For example, since the checks are numbered as they are printed, we don't have to go through a 'void' process if there's an error. Manual checks are also easy to do."

Before, we typed them on a typewriter. With EZCheck we simply enter the account, the payee name and information, and print the check."

THE COMPONENTS

ACOM's solution for Relizon consisted of QuickForm check design software, EZCheck for Windows check processing software, two Xerox DocuPrint N17 MICR-enhanced laser printers from ACOM, a Formax folder-sealer, and maintenance contracts for the hardware and software. Additionally, Relizon purchased ACOM's unique

Secure-A-Card PCMCIA security card and card reader. Check-face information resides on the card, which is inserted into the reader when checks are needed. On completion of a check run, the card is returned to secure storage. ACOM also supplies MICR toner, engineered specifically for the DocuPrint N17 printer. Relizon furnishes its own check stock.

"One of the great benefits of the solution is that we no longer have to monitor and control our check inventory," Will says. "Blank stock is always on hand, and doesn't pose a security risk if left unattended. In addition, once the check form has been designed, we can use it indefinitely and change or update it as necessary with QuickForm."

NO PROCEDURAL CHANGES

Nothing in the company's back-end system had to change to accommodate EZCheck, since it is compatible with all financial management software. Now, check and remittance advice print simultaneously on a single sheet of paper, with the new form incorporating a horizontal tear-off perforation. Formerly, checks representing multiple invoices might run over to the next check form, but the ACOM solution allows for multiple remittance advices, for 10 to 12 invoices. Beyond that, remittance overflow goes to a separate sheet of plain paper and is manually inserted into a separate envelope; previously, the spool data had to accommodate a check format which had tractor-fed sides.

ELECTRONIC CAPABILITIES

Will says that the ACOM solution is currently used exclusively for its accounts payable check printing. However, she is mindful that the system is now ACH-capable, enabling direct deposit transactions such as internal payments of expense reimbursements and credit union account deposits. ACOM's ACH capability saves time and steps by performing the entire operation automatically.

SUCCESS!

In terms of direct savings, Will estimates that the old way and the ACOM way are about equal. However, in terms of indirect costs - time, better use of personnel, equipment maintenance expense and the like - the savings are significant.

"And it's easy to use," she says. "All we have to do is pop in the key (Secure-A-Card) and print the checks!"

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