



ACCOUNTS PAYABLE



Transforming Accounts Payable Into a High-Value, High Visibility Operation

Esker's Accounts Payable solution brings greater efficiency and control to Are Media company-wide.

ESKER

At a Glance

Are Media



Media company



4,000 vendors



600 employees



Headquarters: Sydney,
New South Wales



Established: 1930



PeopleSoft ERP



Challenges

Dispersed data challenges AP team

Are Media Pty Ltd is Australia and New Zealand's leading premium content and experiences company geared towards women since the 1930s. Continuing to be future-focused and pushing boundaries by expanding their portfolio across lifestyle, entertainment, fashion, beauty, homes, and food, they tell these stories across print magazines, websites, video, social, customer review sites, podcasts and immersive experiences.

There were two main challenges prompting Are Media to seek out a new accounts payable (AP) solution. First, the old AP solution had reached the end of usability. The second major challenge — and perhaps, the most painful — was that there was a lack of visibility and transparency. Previously, there was no visibility into where an invoice was, what's been paid or even what the outstanding liabilities were. This issue went beyond AP — it was difficult for the Finance team to finalise end of month closure activities and for the business to know the amount of cash available at any given moment.

Melissa Xuereb, Finance Systems Manager at Are Media, explained that “it typically took us 12 days on average to process a PO invoice and 20 days on average to process a non-PO invoice.” She continued: “What’s more, the vendor portal wasn’t reliable, so the vendors were often communicating with the AP team via email, persistently asking about the payment status, putting additional pressure on the team to answer those queries.” Are Media knew it needed a more sustainable alternative to optimise its AP process.

Objectives



Increase visibility into AP process



Improve reporting capabilities



Accelerate invoice processing time



Reduce time spent on vendor queries

Solution

Overcoming the most persistent obstacles for the AP team

After looking into several AP automation vendors, Are Media ultimately chose Esker's Accounts Payable solution for its robust capabilities. According to Ms. Xuereb, the other solutions they had evaluated were very complex and lacked the workflow structure that Are Media sought. In 2020 and 2021, due to COVID-19, Are Media completed implementation of Esker's Accounts Payable solution remotely.

Esker has created instant visibility for all stakeholders in the AP processing cycle. "Esker has allowed us to get a good grip over our invoices — we can see when a specific invoice was received, and how long it has spent at every stage in the cycle. We have also set up alerts notifying users that a certain invoice is pending action from them," said Ms. Xuereb. The process that used to take half an hour to an hour is now completed within five minutes thanks to Esker.

Driven by touchless processing, electronic workflow management and reporting capabilities, Esker's solution not only transformed how the AP team run their day-to-day operations but has also provided the much-needed visibility into invoice statuses, DPO and other financial metrics.

The team effort between Are Media and Esker was a testament to excellent collaboration. The implementation and onboarding process was very smooth. The simple and user-friendly solution proved to be especially helpful during remote implementation. A lot of Are Media's requirements were configured into the solution. "I've implemented a lot of finance systems here at Are Media and Esker was one of the cleanest projects I've ever done. This project has given me the confidence that we can implement systems 100% remotely," remarked Ms. Xuereb.

She further added that the online tools, quick guides and training videos have been really useful, especially for new staff on the team. "Our experience with Esker's Customer Experience, Professional Services and Support staff was wonderful. The support hub is really useful, and we get the answers we want in a timely manner," she continued.

"Esker's solution has provided much better visibility and efficiency to our AP processes and the intuitive user interface won Esker many friends here at Are Media in a very short period of time."

Melissa Xuereb
Finance Systems Manager, Are Media

Woman's Day

**THE AUSTRALIAN
Women's Weekly**

COUNTRYSTYLE

are media

**AUSTRALIAN
HOUSE
& GARDEN**

INSIDE

Take5

belle

**GOURMET
TRAVELLER**

realiving

Finance Systems Manager, Are Media

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Reduced processing of both PO and non-PO invoices by 50%

 **Increased visibility & control**

 Improved reporting capabilities

 Improved DPO from 20 to 10 days **Reduced response time for vendor queries by 30%**

Results

Achieving efficiency and control company-wide

Shortly after deployment, Are Media achieved remarkable efficiency gains with Esker's Accounts Payable solution. The new process has supercharged the productivity of the AP team — accelerating procure-to-pay timelines and helping the AP team to answer vendor queries quickly by bringing up all the information in seconds.

Dashboards are available on the go so that managers can keep track of operations anytime, anywhere. Everyone is assigned their own queue, and everything is quite visible. Now, if someone is flooded with too many invoices, another member of the team can jump in and handle the processing, according to Ms. Xuereb. Esker's auto-learning feature is a huge time-saver. The team no longer needs to spend time keying in invoice information and repopulating all the data every time a new invoice comes.

The daily alerts prompting user actions help ensure that nothing is overlooked, keeping invoices moving through the system steadily. "Instead of taking up to 12 days to process an invoice with a PO like it did in the past, today we can process in just 6 days. Similarly, for a non-PO invoice, the days to process have significantly shortened from 20 days to just 10", commented Ms. Xuereb.

Not only has Esker improved and streamlined the invoice flow at Are Media but has also provided better insight into Days Payable Outstanding (DPO). “We have created different reports in Esker for different groups of vendors — some of our vendors have shorter payment terms and some of our big suppliers have a longer lead time for payment. Esker has helped us in generating those reports on a monthly basis,” added Ms Xuereb.

Are Media can now implement standardised payments in compliance with vendor terms to improve DPO and also report on their payment terms and times to Australian Taxation Office (ATO) under the new Payment Times Reporting Scheme.

The relationship with Esker has opened a lot of doors for Are Media by providing the company with a strong digital foundation. "Moving forward, we know there's an opportunity to possibly expand to other automation solutions. We are in the midst of implementing a new ERP solution. Once that's done, we will look at other potential solution options such as Esker's Expense Management and Cash Application solutions," she concluded.

Want to automate your accounts payable process like Are Media?

Our team is at your service.

Get in touch with Esker

About Esker

Esker is the global authority in AI-powered business solutions for the Office of the CFO. Leveraging the latest in automation technologies, Esker's Source-to Pay and Order-to-Cash solutions optimise working capital and cashflow, enhance decision-making, and drive better collaboration and human-to-human relationships with customers, suppliers and employees. Esker operates in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia Pacific with global headquarters in Lyon, France, and U.S. headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin

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