BLOG POST — WEEK 1 OF 5

# Why Your AP Team is Still Drowning —

# And It's Not Their Fault

*Most accounts payable teams aren't inefficient — they're just running a process designed for a pre-AI world. Here's what the modern alternative looks like.*

**Category:** AP Automation | **Audience:** AP Managers, Finance Leaders | **Read time:** ~5 min

## The Monday morning ritual nobody talks about

It's 9 a.m. on Monday. Somewhere in your organisation, an AP team member is opening an email inbox full of supplier invoices — PDFs, scanned images, the odd Excel attachment. They'll spend the next two hours doing what they've done every Monday for years: downloading attachments, uploading to a processing system, correcting what the OCR got wrong, chasing approvals, and manually keying data into the ERP.

Ask them how the process is going and they'll probably shrug. 'It's fine. It's just the job.'

But here's what 'fine' actually looks like by the numbers:

- Invoice processing costs between $10 and $15 per invoice when done manually, compared to under $3 with automation
- Up to 80% of AP time is spent on non-value-adding tasks like data entry, chasing approvals, and correcting extraction errors
- The average invoice takes 10 to 14 days to process — meaning suppliers routinely miss early payment discount windows
- Peak periods see drop-outs: invoices that fall through the cracks when volume spikes and the system can't keep up

The team isn't failing. The process is.

**The real cost of manual AP**

*It's not just the processing cost per invoice. It's the early payment discounts you miss,* *the duplicate payments that slip through, the supplier relationships that fray when queries go unanswered for days. The inefficiency is systemic — and invisible until you measure it.*

## Three problems that have resisted fixing — until now

Traditional AP automation made real progress in the 2010s. OCR technology reduced manual keying. Workflow tools brought some structure to the approval process. But three fundamental problems have stubbornly persisted:

### 1. OCR still needs babysitting

Optical Character Recognition works reasonably well on clean, standardised invoices. The moment a supplier changes their layout, uses a non-standard template, or sends a slightly skewed scan, extraction quality drops — and someone has to fix it. Every fix is manual. Every fix costs time. Worse: the rules that govern what to extract are usually locked inside the system, requiring a technical expert to change them. Your AP team knows exactly what's wrong; they just can't fix it themselves.

### 2. Rules are rigid, reality is not

Every business has nuanced AP rules. Different GL codes for different vendor types. Routing rules that depend on the invoice amount or the cost centre. Validation logic that changes when a regulation changes or a new entity is added. In most legacy systems, these rules live in configuration files or code. Changing them means raising a support ticket, waiting for IT, and hoping the change doesn't break something upstream. The business moves faster than the system can follow.

### 3. Peaks break the process

Month-end. Quarter-end. A major supplier onboarding. Moments when invoice volume spikes are exactly when accuracy and speed matter most — and exactly when traditional systems buckle. Invoice drop-outs at peak load aren't a bug; they're a structural feature of on-premise, fixed-capacity infrastructure. The process was designed for average load, not peak load.

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## What changes when you add Cloud and AI

The arrival of large language models — and cloud-native infrastructure to run them at scale — fundamentally changes the economics of these three problems.

Consider the extraction problem. Rather than training a rigid OCR model on specific field positions, a prompt-based AI system lets a non-technical user describe, in plain

English, what data they want from a document. 'Extract the invoice number, vendor name, total amount, and all line item descriptions.' The system figures out where those fields are — even if the layout has changed. When the output isn't quite right, the user refines the prompt. No IT ticket required.

The rules problem improves too. A modern rules engine built on natural language processing lets AP managers define validation logic the same way they'd explain it to a new team member: 'If the vendor name is ABC Supplies and the line type is ITEM, set the GL code to this value.' The rule is tested live, saved, and applied to all future invoices from that vendor.

And cloud-native containerised infrastructure solves the peak problem by design. There's no fixed capacity ceiling. When volume spikes, the system scales. When it drops, resources wind down. You pay for what you use — and invoices don't drop out.

**From reactive to predictive**

*The shift isn't just efficiency. It's visibility. A modern AP platform doesn't just process invoices — it gives your CFO a real-time view of liabilities, clearance rates, and cash flow exposure. The AP function stops being a back-office cost centre and starts being a source of financial intelligence.*

## What this looks like in practice: OneVue Invoice

OneVue Invoice, built by Ecovue Solutions, was designed from the ground up for this new paradigm. It is a cloud-native, AI-powered accounts payable platform that covers the full invoice lifecycle — from the moment a supplier submits an invoice (by email, SharePoint, OneDrive, or manual upload) to the moment verified data lands in your ERP.

A few things that make it different in practice:

- Prompt-based extraction means your AP team configures the system — not your IT department. Prompts can be created, refined, and saved by non-technical users, and the system learns per-vendor over time.
- Automated multi-channel ingestion handles Outlook 365, Gmail, SharePoint Online, OneDrive, and system folders. Invoices arrive via whatever channel the supplier prefers.
- The AskOneVue AI agent lets anyone — from an AP clerk to a CFO — query the system in natural language. 'What invoices are pending approval from Vendor X?' 'What's our clearance rate this month?' No navigation required.
- Pre-built ERP integrations with Oracle E-Business Suite, PeopleSoft, and Fusion Apps mean verified data flows into your system of record without manual re-entry.

- Usage-based pricing means no per-seat licensing surprises. Any number of users can access the system — cost scales with volume, not headcount.

The result is an AP process that is genuinely seamless: suppliers get paid on time, queries are answered without manual intervention, and your finance team has the visibility they need to make better decisions.

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## The bottom line

Your AP team is not the problem. They're doing exactly what the process asks of them — and the process was designed before the tools existed to make it dramatically better.

The question isn't whether AP automation is worth it. Study after study shows the ROI is significant: lower processing costs, fewer duplicate payments, more early payment discounts captured, better supplier relationships. The question is whether you're using automation that was built for the last decade or the next one.

Cloud + AI changes the equation. Prompt-based extraction, scalable infrastructure, natural language rules, and real-time visibility are no longer aspirational — they're available today.

*Next week: We go deep on prompt-based extraction — how it works, why it's different from legacy OCR, and how a non-technical AP manager used it to take their straight-through processing rate from 40% to over 85%.*

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### Ready to see the AP process your team deserves?

Book a demo with Ecovue Solutions and bring your own invoices. We'll show you exactly what OneVue Invoice does with them.

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