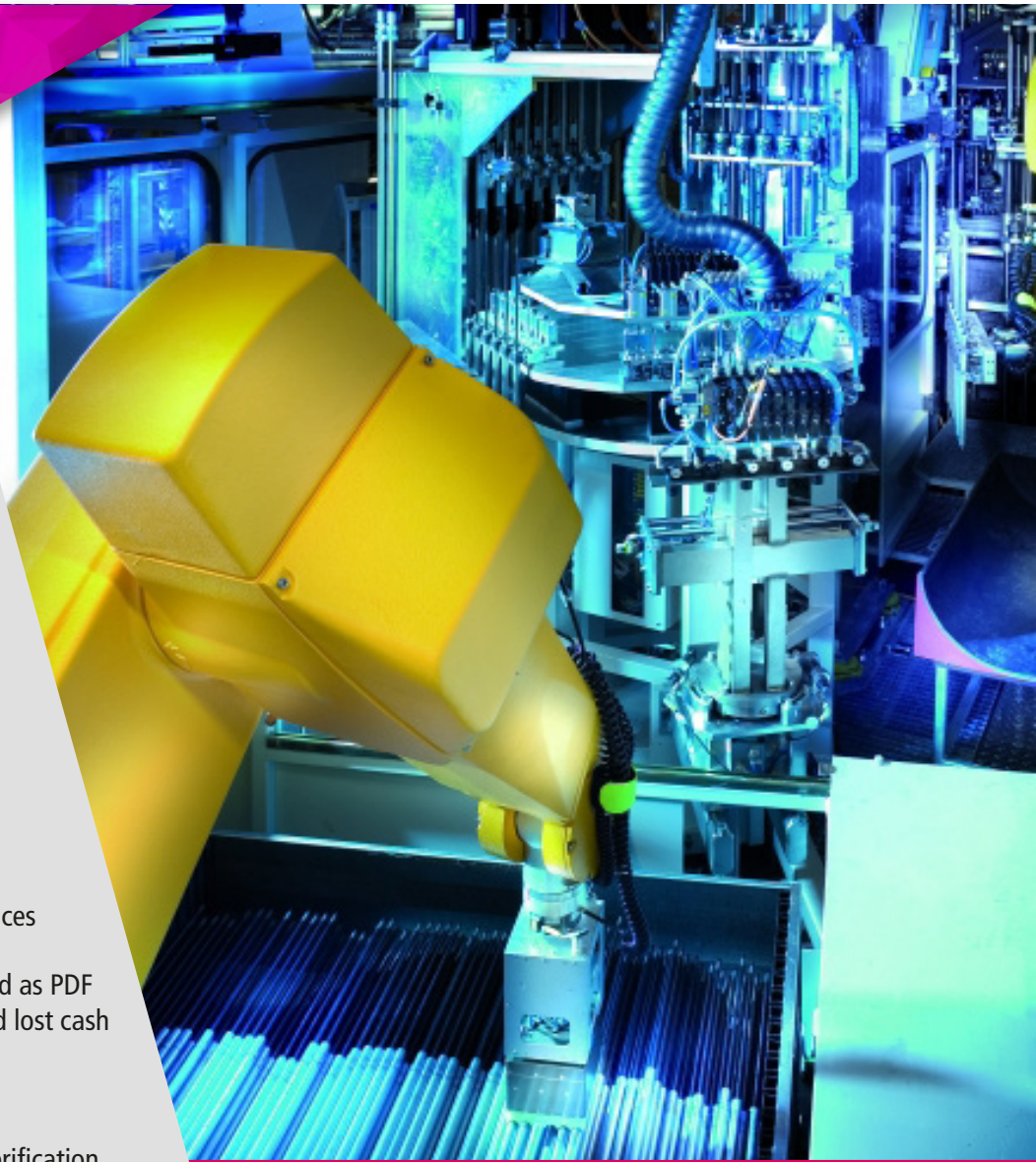


INVOICE SOLUTION

# Stabilus



**Challenge:**

- » Processing of more than 65,000 invoices per year
- » 50 percent of invoices to be processed as PDF
- » Reduction of processing time to avoid lost cash discount

**Solution:**

- » Automatic and electronic software verification
- » Transparent approval model through electronic workflows
- » Romanian site processes invoices autonomously in 2nd company code

**Benefits:**

- » Processing time for invoice verification reduced by an average of 70 percent
- » Transparency of each processing status
- » Optimal cashflow planning
- » Process security through SAP HCM connection



# Efficient invoice processing for optimum damping

True quality is a continuous process of improvement. This statement is a philosophy principle of Stabilus GmbH. It is therefore not surprising that the world market leader constantly monitors its potential for optimization in all areas of the company and takes action where necessary. In order to be able to work even more efficiently in the accounts payable department, it was decided to introduce an automated invoice solution. The partner for this project is AFI Solutions GmbH.

## **P**rocessing time of 2.5 weeks

Prior to the introduction of automatic and electronic software verification, the processing time for manual invoice verification was roughly 2.5 weeks per invoice!

The following cases were particularly time-consuming:

- The original invoice was lost and the search in the specialist departments was tedious and not always successful.
- The comparison with signature lists to determine whether the correct representative had authorized the invoice for payment. If not, it had to be verified again.
- The comparison of the approved original to the backup copy made. It had to be avoided that an invoice and the duplicate were accidentally posted twice in SAP due to a number error for example.
- The inability to quickly find out the status of the invoice as long as it was in the approval process.

According to Christine Möhlig, an employee in financial accounting and key user at Stabilus, *„everyone was rummaging around and the manual effort was significant.“*

## **C**ompensate for growth

Stabilus knew that manual work was inefficient. Time and again, a committee pondered the possibility of mapping this process electronically. Continuous growth and the resulting need for more staff were the deciding factors in implementing the project for the automated processing of incoming invoices. However, since new hires were only to be made secondarily, a software solution was to compensate for this and take the pressure off existing staff.

## Objectives and challenges

The main targets to be achieved with the software solution were a significant reduction in processing time to avoid lost cash discounts, a clear approval model by means of electronic workflows, and an immediate ability to provide information on all invoices in process.

Stabilus had its eyes on the goal but was also aware of the challenges ahead. One of them was to find a suitable software provider. Another was to take paper away from staff and introduce a new way of working. The project group searched for vendors and invited five of them. AFI Solutions convinced them with an economic offer, a deep understanding of SAP, an open mindset, and the uncomplicated expandability of the software to individual requirements.

## Intelligent Workflow

The invoices delivered by the mail carrier are now first sorted and then digitized before being read out by OCR. Pre-processing then begins automatically.

AFI Invoice skims the recognized header and item data and checks various parameters of the invoice: Does your price match?, Do you match a purchase order?, Are you a master agreement? and others. Depending on what is identified, the system automatically starts the correct workflow.

Through the SAP HCM connection, it is clear where the approval process starts, how it continues, and when it ends. A transaction with an intolerable price variance, for example, is sent directly to the responsible purchaser for clarification. If everything is correct, the document is posted for payment.

## E-Invoicing continues to optimize

Stabilus now receives more than 50 percent of the total incoming volume of invoices electronically. For this purpose, vendors were successively asked to send their invoices by e-mail with PDF attachments to a designated e-mail box. Since the Tax Simplification Act of 2011, this entry channel is no longer a hurdle.

*„The benefit for our vendors is that their invoice is received faster and they no longer have to print it out, envelope it, frank it and take it to the post office,“* says Christine Möhlig, explaining the great acceptance of PDF invoices.

The difference to processing paper invoices is that AFI Invoice reads the e-mail inbox to the minute and automatically transfers the PDFs to the electronic archive and OCR.

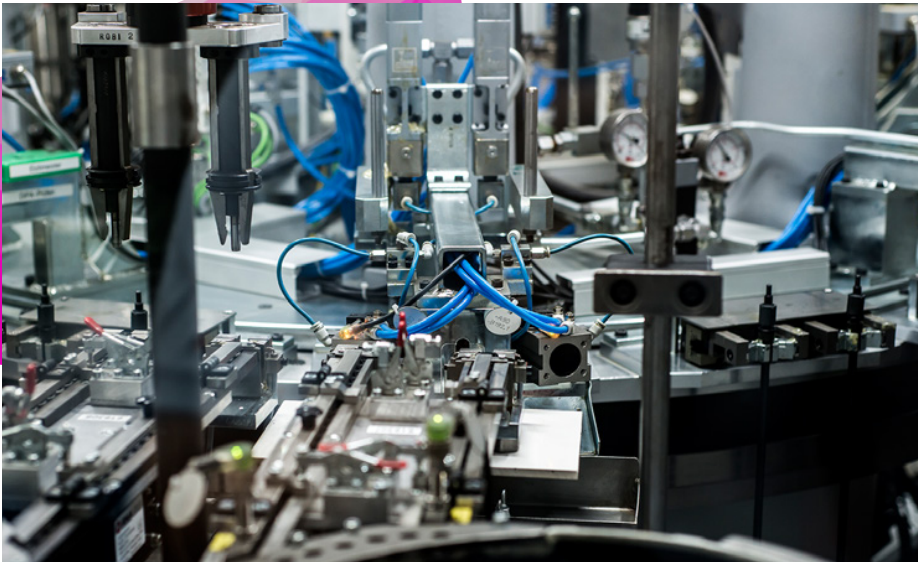
In order to ensure that only authenticated invoices enter the workflow, the solution performs a sender validation. This allows over 90 percent of invoices to be transferred directly from the software for validation. For the remaining invoices, an accountant decides on their handling. E-invoicing eliminates manual preparation and storage in the physical archive.

## Fastest response time

The accounting department has a global overview of the status of every invoice in the company from the moment it is received. The electronic invoice ledger »Monitor« clearly indicates who is currently processing the invoice.

By means of storable filters, everyone in the accounting department can set their views as required. Virtually everything can be filtered: from current transactions or transactions that have been closed for years to direct searches for vendors, due dates, amounts, company codes etc. The digitized original invoice can, of course, be displayed in the Monitor with a single click from the archive.





Even a person who is not involved in accounting has the option to see the status of all his or her personal transactions quickly and easily.

This transparency ensures immediate information and a more convenient working environment at all times.

*„All of our employees appreciate the fact that we have taken the paper away from them. It wasn't easy at first, but the benefits speak for themselves,“* says Christine Möhlig.

### **A** problem foreseen is a problem avoided

In order to avoid any further loss of cash discounts, it is ensured that there are no avertable time delays. The demand on the quality of data extraction and validation is very high at Stabilus.

For this reason, electronic control of the flow rate in this process step takes place every morning. If the system detects that the volume of newly arrived invoices is causing too high a workload for the validating persons, human intervention becomes necessary. If required, the validation department receives ad hoc support so that the overall process is not delayed.

### **O**ptimal cashflow planning

Now that due dates are regularly retrieved, the forecast is no longer burdened by unplanned cash drains. *„It used to occur from time to time that supplier invoices to be paid were received for payment and were not actually scheduled for the month in question,“* recalls Christine Möhlig. *„By processing invoices completely electronically, we can now assess our liquidity situation on a day-by-day basis and avoid the expiration of cash discount periods.“*

### **A**cceptance among auditors

When the annual audit is due, it is no longer a big hassle because of AFI Invoice. The auditor receives access and a short training session to get started right away. Since the introduction of electronic invoice processing, no auditor has ever asked Stabilus for a paper original. If auditors require to view the invoice, they simply click a button to access it. They can also view all the time stamps of the audit-proof archiving in the system.

For companies, this procedure is an asset as there is no need to assign staff to search for paper invoices in the basement archive.

### **A** stand-alone solution in Rumania

The site in Romania also processes its invoices with AFI Invoice. In the second company code, the system is set to English, which the software automatically provides as standard. The verification process is analogous to that of the German parent company. The documents are even stored in the same archive. Only a country-specific view of the transactions is set in customizing.

### **E**ar to the market

In order to stay »up to date«, Stabilus uses the customer event to which AFI Solutions invites once a year. Here, like-minded people have the chance to exchange ideas and to approach the manufacturer directly with suggestions.

*„Some good product enhancements have already come out of this congress,“* says Jörg Günther, member of the management at AFI Solutions and »ear to the market«. He remembers Christine Möhlig well - as a constructive contributor.

As the world's leading supplier of gas springs, dampers, and electromechanical POWERISE® drives, Stabilus has been proving its expertise in the automotive industry and many other sectors for eight decades. With this portfolio, Stabilus optimizes opening, closing, lifting, lowering as well as adjusting and offers protection against shocks and vibrations.

The company has its headquarters in Koblenz and employs more than six thousand persons worldwide. Stabilus has a global production network in nine countries. Through regional offices and sales partners, Stabilus is also present in over fifty countries in Europe, North, Central and South America, and in the Asia-Pacific region.

Stabilus S.A. is listed on the Prime Standard of the German Stock Exchange and included in the SDAX index.

[www.stabilus.com](http://www.stabilus.com)

AFI Solutions GmbH is a leading solution provider for the digitization and optimization of document processes around SAP. The solutions cover the entire purchase-to-pay and order-to-cash process.

AFI is the only software manufacturer on the market that offers everything from a single source: With the RedPaperCenter as a managed service, companies can easily outsource the digitization of a wide variety of paper documents. In process optimization, AFI scores with SAP-integrated software solutions. The cloud-based DocumentHub as software as a service (= SaaS) completes the unique product portfolio.

**AFI Solutions GmbH**  
**Sigmaringer Straße 109**  
**70567 Stuttgart**

[info@afi-solutions.com](mailto:info@afi-solutions.com)  
[www.afi-solutions.com](http://www.afi-solutions.com)

SAP, the SAP logo and the SAP partner logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of SAP SE or an SAP subsidiary in Germany and other countries.



POWERFUL  
SOLUTIONS  
FOR SAP