

## CASE STUDY:

ATEA

# NEW PURCHASE-TO-PAY SYSTEM ALLOWS SMARTER PROCESSES AT ATEA

ATEA, THE LEADING SUPPLIER OF IT INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE NORDIC AND BALTIC REGIONS, WAS LOOKING FOR A COMBINED SOLUTION: WITH PURCHASING, AUTOMATED INVOICE PROCESSING, AND TRAVEL AND EXPENSE MANAGEMENT. IT NEEDED TO SUPPORT THEIR DECENTRALIZED PURCHASING STRATEGY, PLUS INTEGRATE WITH THEIR EXISTING ERP AND PAYROLL SYSTEMS. MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT HAD TO BE INCREDIBLY USER-FRIENDLY. THEY FOUND IT ALL WITH BASWARE.

### MANY PEOPLE THINK THAT CENTRALIZATION IS THE BEST WAY TO OPTIMIZATION



At Atea, the opposite has proved to be the case - at least when it comes to their indirect purchasing strategy. Atea has always let employees do their purchasing themselves. They wanted to take the next step by introducing a purchasing system that supports this decentralized purchasing strategy, and move purchase orders away from central administration out to employees. This strategy has been even more successful than expected.

### GOAL: TO OPTIMIZE PURCHASING AND RELATED PROCESSES

Atea helps their own customers get their IT purchasing, delivery and service processes flowing

by delivering the necessary hardware and solutions.

"It was time to see whether we could optimize our own processes within purchasing, invoice and expense handling processes. Atea buys much more hardware than anything else, so hardware purchases would still be handled by central purchasing. Our aim was to find a purchasing system that could support our strategy of making individual employees responsible for all indirect purchases," explains Rune Pind Nielsen, Atea's Accounts Payable Manager.

### DECENTRALIZED PURCHASING STRATEGY OPTIMIZES TIME AND PROCESSES

"A purchasing system that supports decentralized purchasing has improved our processes in many ways, not just in purchasing," explains Rune.

#### CUSTOMER:

ATEA

#### INDUSTRY:

IT Services

#### LOCATION:

Nordics & Baltics, HQ in Denmark

#### BASWARE SOLUTION:

- Purchase Management
- Invoice Processing with Matching
- Travel & Expense Management

basware

Simplify Operations, Spend Smarter.



## SIMPLIFIED PROCESSES



“Our department heads used to have to provide authorization twice: once to

authorize a purchase, and later to authorize the invoice after delivery was made. That’s twice as much work. What we wanted was a solution that lets department heads deal with purchases just once. With our purchasing system from Basware, the employee creates a purchase requisition and gets it approved by their department head. By the time the invoice arrives, it’s already approved and can be sent for payment automatically - assuming the deliverable is as agreed. That halves the work of two people.”

Atea has thus turned the process on its head: they have dropped the resource-intensive hunt for invoice documents, ownership of invoices or approvals that many businesses have to endure, while at the same time ensuring the right purchases are made.

### THE REAL SAVINGS ARE NOT FROM DISCOUNTS

By decentralizing purchasing,

Atea is not expecting to save much on the purchases themselves. They see the real savings in the smarter process:

“Our new process creates savings by freeing up a lot of time. For us, what matters most is transparency, and making sure that people understand what they are approving. For example, we had challenges with buying consultancy services. Often, it was only when department heads saw the invoices for consulting work that had been done that they started to ask themselves whether it should have been done the way it was. Of course, it was too late by then, because the work had already been completed,” says Rune.

### AUTOMATION FOR SPEED AND EASE OF USE

Individual departments at Atea are creating as many standard purchases as self-service purchase requisitions as possible. This will make it easier for them to buy what they need. The goal is to enter all their standard purchases in the system by

themselves. Atea also wanted a search functionality, so that employees could find standard purchases more easily.

Once standard purchases are created, the next step is to increase automation. Atea wanted to ensure as high a level of matching purchase orders to invoices as possible - so that the system can make payments automatically. That way, employees only need to deal with those invoices that do not matching with any purchase order.

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**“OUR AIM IS TO ENTER EVERYTHING IN THE SYSTEM. STANDARD PURCHASES ARE HANDLED LOCALLY AS THE NEED ARISES, SO IT’S INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENTS THAT ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR CREATING THEM,”**

explains Rune.

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## MAXIMIZE BENEFITS BY COMBINING INVOICE PROCESSING, PURCHASING, AND TRAVEL EXPENSE INTO ONE SYSTEM

For many years, Atea had separate invoice processing and travel & expense management systems. When choosing a new purchasing system, they wanted one combined system where everything was integrated, and had the same recognizable user interface. This was because the greatest benefits lie in combining a purchasing system with invoice and travel & expense processing.

“What we were lacking was, quite simply, a user-friendly system with everything combined,” explains Rune. He continues: “We used to approve invoices retrospectively. With our new purchasing system, which is totally integrated with the payables side, you wouldn’t believe how many approvals are granted automatically. The aim is for most of them to go straight

for payment, be it to a supplier or to one of our own employees.

This saves time in the departments, and here at central administration.”

“We’ve already been able to free up two full-time employees and assign them to other work - after just three or four months.”

## CLEAR INVOICE OWNERSHIP AND BETTER OVERVIEW OF SPENDING

Atea’s old invoice system was structured largely in the same way as the new system from Basware. One essential but vital difference is that responsibility for invoice posting has now been delegated to individual departments. Previously, when Atea received an invoice, central administration might have to guess who it belonged to. It was not unheard of for invoices to be e-mailed from one person to another and from one department to another until someone recognized them, and

could say which account they belonged to.

Now, with decentralized purchasing, there is also decentralized invoice posting. No one needs to spend time on guesswork anymore. No more sending invoices from one department to another. And departments have a much better overview of what they are spending.

“It’s just so easy with Basware. To simplify things even more, we selected the 20 to 25 accounts that each department used most and had them put onto a preferred list in the system. Now our employees don’t have to search for the right account among the hundreds of accounts we use.”



**BASWARE  
EASIER AND  
FASTER TO USE**

There is no doubt that both management and central administration are pleased with the new combined system, which



**END-TO-END  
SOLUTION**

# HAPPY END USERS

**“IT JUST RUNS; A SMOOTH, INTUITIVE SYSTEM THAT LETS YOU SKIP BACK AND FORTH.”**

**“NINE OUT OF TEN HERE. I'D HAVE GIVEN IT TEN OUT OF TEN IF DIDN'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING AT ALL.”**

**“IT WAS REALLY EASY. I PRINTED THE GUIDE BEFORE I GOT STARTED, BUT DIDN'T HAVE TO USE IT. IT WAS SMOOTH SAILING.”**

## **USER-FRIENDLY TRAVEL AND EXPENSE MANAGEMENT**

Atea implemented the Basware Travel and Expense Management

has made it much easier for them to see what is happening, and made their everyday life much easier. But how have the departments received the new system?

“With mixed feelings, to be honest,” says Rune. “Until they got used to using the new system, they were always asking me: ‘why should I do that, isn’t that your job?’ But now, they realize it makes more sense for the departments themselves to categorize the costs - since they know what they are. They have realized that there are actually fewer steps in the process with Basware - compared to before. So they’re smiling again.”

## **OVERWHELMINGLY POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM USERS**

The positive feedback has been quite over-whelming. “Just two days after the system was ready to use, my mailbox was overflowing with e-mails that people were sending me.” Here are some examples:

system mainly because it could be combined with their purchasing and invoice processing systems and thus replace previous systems. Atea has not regretted this decision for a moment:



“It’s incredibly simple and user-friendly, and much better than

our old systems. Buttons are correctly labeled, sequences are constructed logically and screens resemble those with which you are already familiar.”

“With the old system, you needed a thick user manual just to get started - which often led to people not getting started at all. A user manual is unnecessary with Basware. And where we used to have different passwords for each of our systems, now it’s single-sign-on, which just makes life so much easier,” explains Rune with a big smile.

“We chose the Basware solution precisely because it was so user-friendly. All 1,500 of our employees have to be able to use it.”





## EMPLOYEES ARE FILLING EXPENSE REPORTS FASTER

Another major benefit is the integration with credit cards. Atea chose to shut down expensive manual advances and is switching as many staff as possible to personal liability credit cards that give employees more than 30 days of credit.

"It's just brilliant because our employees are now really interested in billing their expenses as quickly as possible. If they do it at the end of the month, they usually get the money from us before it's debited to their credit cards. And we don't need to round up money or vouchers either. Now it runs like greased lightning," says Rune.

## ATEA'S SELECTION PROCESS

At Atea, the selection process started by looking at what the company wanted from a

new solution and - from their experience with past systems - what processes the new system should be able to support. They needed a solution that could be integrated with other solutions in use, and that could exchange master data with existing ERP systems, including the payroll system.

They also had three 'show-stopper' criteria, namely:

- User-friendliness was paramount
- It had to be a mature 'out-of-the-box' system that was ready to run with hardly any tweaks
- The purchasing and invoice processing system had to work together

They hoped that they could also get travel and expense system that worked with the other systems.

"We identified five suppliers who could live up to what we wanted, but only Basware had all three systems in a mature 'out-of-the-

box' version. When we looked closer, it actually turned out that Basware was strong in all three areas. During the selection process, we also discovered that most purchasing systems are built around a central purchasing department. For us, what was really important was that we could make our decentralized purchasing strategy even stronger. Basware's system could do that - no problem," says Rune.

## RAPID IMPLEMENTATION

The whole process was super-fast, according to Rune. "We started with our performance specifications in March, and chose the supplier we wanted in June. Implementation was complete by October. And implementation was not about tailoring the systems for our business activities, but more about the IT challenges involved in linking to many different servers and gaining access through approximately five million firewalls and ports. The system setup itself was carried out very quickly and professionally," says Rune.

**READY**  
**'OUT-OF-THE-BOX'**



And it was precisely the aim of the new system that it should need as little tailoring as possible.

**“IT HAS BEEN A GREAT SUCCESS. IT WAS AN INTENSIVE PROCESS, ADMITTEDLY, BUT A REALLY GOOD EXPERIENCE TOO. NOW WE HAVE A COMBINED SYSTEM THAT IS ACTUALLY A BIT BETTER THAN WE EXPECTED,”**

says Rune.



### **THE NEXT PHASE OF THE PROJECT: CONTRACT LIFE CYCLE MANAGEMENT**

Contract Life Cycle Management is a separate project that has not been implemented yet, but which is exactly what management wants. The idea here is to file all contracts in the purchasing system. These could be building leases, car leases, employment contracts and customer contracts.

### **ABOUT BASWARE**

Basware is the global leader in providing purchase-to-pay solutions, e-invoicing and innovative financing services. Basware's commerce and financing network connects businesses around the globe. As the largest open business network in the world, Basware provides scale and reach for organizations of all sizes, enabling them to grow their business and unlock value across their operations by simplifying and streamlining financial processes. Small and large companies around the world achieve significant cost savings, more flexible payment terms, greater efficiencies and closer relationships with their suppliers.

Find out more at:

[WWW.BASWARE.COM](http://WWW.BASWARE.COM)



At present, Atea uses a system that involves scanning contracts. The problem is that you can't search by date, which means that you can't quickly see when a customer's contract is due to be renewed, but need to look at each contract manually to find the end date.

Atea's goal is to include all kinds of contracts and agreements in the system to improve transparency. In Atea's case, this would mean that they could follow up on customer agreements before they expire, get an idea of what their future costs are and, last but not least, make sure that they have the right contracts. "What we want is to be able to see what we've committed ourselves to - as far as our customers, suppliers and employees - and when we are due to renegotiate or terminate our agreements," concludes Rune.



Rune Pind Nielsen, Manager for Accounts Payable, Atea

# ATEA

## **ABOUT: ATEA**

Atea is the leading Nordic and Baltic supplier of IT infrastructure with approximately 6,500 employees. Atea is present in 85 cities in Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Atea delivers IT products from leading vendors and assist its customers with specialist competencies within IT infrastructure services with its approximately 3,700 consultants and 7,500 technology certifications.

Atea had revenue of more than NOK 22 billion in 2013 and is listed on Oslo Stock Exchange.

