



# FACILITATING COMPANY CASH FLOW AND SEASONAL PEAKS WITH AUTOMATED AP INVOICING

Ball Horticultural Company expands its use of Esker to automate accounts payable (AP) invoicing within its existing SAP® software environment.

## Project Background

Ball Horticultural Company (Ball) is a leader in the breeding, producing and distributing of ornamental plants and horticultural supplies to professional growers worldwide. Working in a B2B environment, Ball is in constant communication with customers and suppliers, which makes the need for fast, efficient and accessible documentation a necessity – not always an easy task in a traditionally low-tech industry with seasonal peaks.

As part of its overall goal to streamline order-to-cash (O2C) and procure-to-pay (P2P) processes, Ball sought to further improve how it handled and managed inbound AP documents within its SAP system.

### Cash flow issues

Ball's AP documents had previously been managed by hand and manually entered into its SAP system. To facilitate all of the paper during the busy season, Ball would typically hire numerous temps to help manually process thousands of invoices.

For Mark Morris, Director and CIO at Ball Horticultural Company, it was clear the amount of time and labor required was having a negative impact. "Our AP process drives our receivables, so we can't invoice customers until our suppliers get paid," he said. "Keeping up with seasonal invoice spikes impacts our cash flow."



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Mark Morris – Director & CIO

## Expanding the Use of Esker

Ball's decision to automate AP stemmed from a larger project initiated years prior, when the company leveraged Esker's on-premises platform to address its challenges with subscription management, eventually helping eliminate the need to print and file paper documents for both customers and suppliers. The option to expand to AP was key selling point for Ball, knowing it would eventually want to leverage OCR and link into SAP.

"Esker was the only one who could provide us the customized solution we wanted at the time," recalled Morris. "Certain suppliers can't do EDI, so OCR was an attractive alternative. In that respect, Esker has really helped us leap-frog our competition – we not only have scan and file capabilities to reduce paper use, we now have 20 major vendors turned on for 'touchless' processing."

## Benefits Achieved

Expanding the use of automation to include AP documents has allowed Ball to get third-party suppliers with the most complex invoices live and touchless on Esker's solution, while reducing the overall amount of paper handling, manual filing and dependence on temps to manage seasonal volume increases.

Ball has since seen a number of benefits as a result, including:

- Elimination of an entire storage/filing room
- Reduced processing costs and error rates
- Improved resource management and staff productivity
- Enhanced document traceability and oversight
- Strengthened supplier and customer satisfaction

### Support during implementation

In addition to the benefits realized, Ball was also impressed with Esker's ability to quickly identify issues the company was facing and cultivate a strategic plan of action during solution delivery.

"In a process like this, you find out pretty quickly if your vendor has your back — Esker has our back," said Morris. "Their ability to help identify issues, upgrade the system and address the business needs certainly has won me over. If I could do it all over again with Esker, I absolutely would."

### About Ball Horticultural Company

Founded in 1905 as a wholesale fresh cut flower operation, Ball Horticultural Company is a family-owned company that has grown into an internationally renowned breeder, producer and wholesale distributor of ornamental plants and horticultural products, as well as a supplier of seeds, cuttings and plugs for professional growers worldwide. Ball's global family of breeders, seed and vegetative producers, distribution companies, and research & development teams has a strong presence internationally.

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

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