The Stricker group invests in electronic invoice processing

The construction company from Dortmund, Germany, achieves great transparency and rapid cycle times in invoice processing using xSuite's automated workflow solution. The system runs integrated into the Arriba system integrated at the Stricker companies.

Sand is sand. It will always be an analog material. Nevertheless, digitalization, gradual as it may be, is moving forward in the construction industry as elsewhere in the world. Tobias Saalmann, Head of IT at Stricker Dienstleistung, sees thinking changing in the industry over the last few years. In particular, smaller vendors have opened up to new technologies and send more and more invoices in PDF form.

The Stricker Group has adjusted to this sea change. A new e-mail address for invoice entry is ready to go, and internal workflows for invoice processing have been completely digitalized. For a number of years, Stricker has used the workflow system from xSuite. This system is now to be extended. What is now planned is the implementation of digital folders for construction sites. Here too, Stricker will take advantage of the solutions of the Northern German software developer.

The Stricker Group is a generalist in the area of construction and construction materials. With a history of three generations, the Stricker family's business now boasts 600 employees. Six parent companies in the main location cover specific areas of specialization. With the Stricker Management Holding as the umbrella, Stricker Umwelttechnik covers environmental technology, Stricker Dienstleistung provides construction-oriented services, Infrastrukturbau handles infrastructural construction, Gebrüder Stricker repurposes materials, and the Stricker Projektgesellschaft serves as a project consultancy. Alongside these companies, Stricker has taken on a number of strategic holdings over the last few decades, for construction companies such as Heitkamp & Hülscher in Stadtlohn and H & W Tiefbau in Marl. With its partners, the company can cover the entire life cycle in construction, from the extraction of raw materials and project planning to the actual construction, dismantling, and reuse of raw and recycled materials.

Company
Web: www.stricker-gruppe.de
Sector: Construction Sector
Headquarters: Dortmund, Germany

xSuite® solution
- Automated solution for incoming invoice processing, including electronic invoices (xSuite Invoice)

Decisive arguments for xSuite
- Innovative software developer
- Customer references in the construction sector

Systems integration
- ERP Arriba

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xSuite
It's simple. It's digital.

In the company headquarters in Dortmund as well as in the associate companies, invoices continue to be received in paper form. The Group receives a total of 60,000 per year. At some point, the flood of paper grew and archives overflowed. It came to repeated delays in release, with invoices circulating inhouse and no overview of who was processing them. The result: unnecessary penalties and loss of early-payment benefits.

Quicker and more innovative
For these reasons, the construction company wanted to speed things up and increase innovation through full digitalization of its invoice process chain. Stricker decided on the software developer xSuite, whose "xSuite Invoice" can be well linked with RIB's specialized ERP Arriba.

"xSuite is innovative and is constantly developing new approaches. For instance, we were able to look at topics such as the digital construction folder and archival of delivery notes. Both this and xSuite's references in the construction sector were decisive factors influencing our decison," said Tobias Saalmann.

The invoice processing solution was installed on the central server in the data center of the Stricker Group in Dortmund. There, xSuite integrated into Arriba — this enabled the automatic transfer and checking of invoice data with the vendor master data in the ERP software.

Everyone works on a single system
All parent and those associate companies which have a high enough number of invoices now work independently on the system and organize their electronic invoice workflow through it. Even in the RIB software, the large associate companies perform their postings as independent clients and no longer require their own ERP system (whereas the smaller ones still have their bookkeeping handled by Stricker). This is how the invoice process functions with the xSuite solution: Invoices arrive in Dortmund, Stadtlohn and Marl, receive a barcode, are scanned and assigned to the client to which they belong (parent company or associate company), and are stored electronically in the archive. The OCR software xSuite Capture reads the invoice data and the bookkeeping verifies the results. Then xSuite Invoice transfers the data to Arriba. Once this process is finished, the invoice that has arrived is already parked, just with the status „unchecked."

Signals for discounts speed things up
Now, the actual invoice workflow is on. First, invoice releasers receive the document, verify the accuracy of details and amounts, and check it against any delivery notes available. Then the workflow moves on to the head of construction, who checks the pre-proofed PDF on his screen and releases it. A "discount signal" lights up when payment needs to be especially quick. Posting is the final step in the process. The invoice is set as "approved" in Arriba, ensuring constant accessibility from the ERP software. 145 employees in all connected parent and associate companies work with the new invoice-approval system in this way.

xSuite

It's simple. It's digital.

Image source: Stricker

"It was definitely worth it for us to switch to electronic invoice processing," says Tobias Saalmann. "We can always track the status of an invoice, bookkeeping can handle issues with precision, we can take advantage of all available discounts, and we don't need to fill new file folders with more paper documents."

PDF invoice: no more pressure from vendors

Even if everything is electronic internally, most of the invoices received by Stricker are still paper. Primarily among small vendors, Tobias Saalmann has identified an affinity with invoice dispatch by e-mail — for instance, the GPS provider that sells Stricker equipment for its corporate fleet. Small hardware stores or builders' merchants, however, almost always use paper; but here, too, the tide will turn: "In the next 12 to 18 months, electronic invoice dispatch will increase significantly within the entire construction segment," forecasts the Head of IT. Through the deployment of an xSuite module, which enables electronic invoice receipt and continued automated processing, Stricker is equipped to handle this new paradigm.

The next step will be the implementation of a digital construction folder solution. For projects, Stricker has set a mid-term goal of digitalizing everything — contract, correspondence, images, invoices — that is still filed away in folders. xSuite's digital folder solution serves these purposes. To maintain audit-proof archiving of all data and documents, Stricker will use xSuite's new archive system in the future. Digitalization in the construction industry — the van-guard is in Dortmund, in the fourth generation!

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