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CASE STUDY:

SALUS Group automates processing for tens-of-thousands of mission critical documents

With DocuWare, SALUS Group has streamlined financial document workflows, helping to reduce manual working, accelerate validation processes, increase productivity, and strengthen supplier relationships.

COMPANY & CHALLENGE

Headquartered in Ljubljana, Slovenia, SALUS Group provides wholesale distribution of medical products and devices, along with warehousing, active sales, marketing communications and regulatory services. Founded in 1969, SALUS Group companies employ 480+ people in the CEE region and supply a total of 50,000 different products to 3,000 customers such as hospitals, pharmacies, and health centres.

Pharmaceuticals from 1,500 suppliers are continuously arriving at SALUS Group locations, ready for storage or distribution to healthcare providers. Within SALUS, Veletrgovina, d.o.o.—the Group's biggest wholesale and warehousing company—teams process incoming and

outgoing goods as efficiently as possible, including related invoices, purchase orders (POs), delivery notes, and more.

However, limited functionality in the company's previous document management systems often left users relying on time consuming manual working. For example, the solution could only process invoice headers rather than a line-by-line breakdown of goods and services. As a result, when invoice and PO amounts did not match, employees spent hours cross-checking documents, which can stretch to 30 pages, to find errors. Similarly, the company entered delivery note data to its enterprise resource planning (ERP) system by hand, taking extra time and increasing the risk of error.

SOLUTION

SALUS developed plans for a new approach, replacing its outdated systems with more sophisticated digital capabilities for document management. The objectives were wide ranging: reduce manual working, accelerate data capture workflows, and simplify matching and validating of financial documents, vendor delivery notes, and POs. Ultimately, the company aimed to save time for employees, enabling them to work more efficiently and productively.

During a discussion on new document management systems with its Microsoft partner BE-Terna, SALUS received a recommendation for DocuWare. After assessing the solution, SALUS decided to work with Ricoh business partner Vibor on a pilot DocuWare project, focusing on its core accounts payable (AP) processes.

Eva Mihelčič continues: "We were encouraged by the fact that DocuWare is purpose-built for streamlining AP workflows. The pilot scheme enabled us to confirm the solution was the right fit for our needs.

As the finance team, we are responsible for managing the accounts of four SALUS Group companies. On a company and Group level, we are growing quickly, so document volumes are set to increase. It is therefore essential that we focus our time and resources on valuable tasks rather than basic error-checking and data entry.

Eva Mihelčič, Finance Director at SALUS, Veletrgovina, d.o.o.

> "We were impressed with the digital capabilities for capturing documents related to goods received, for processing invoices on a line-by-line level, and for automating validations."

Eva Mihelčič, Finance Director at SALUS, Veletrgovina, d.o.o.

Among many things, we were impressed with the digital capabilities for capturing documents related to goods received, for processing invoices on a line-by-line level, and for automating validations."
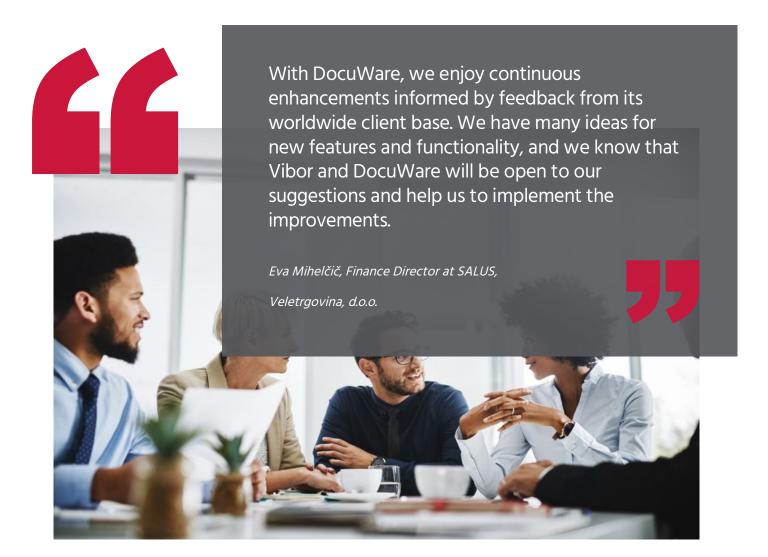
SALUS then worked with Vibor and BE-Terna to implement DocuWare within its main company and three other Group entities, going live on schedule in just four months. During the deployment, Vibor and BE-Terna created several customised web services and integrated DocuWare with Microsoft Dynamics NAV—enabling SALUS to transfer documents and information between the two systems.

Today, SALUS imports incoming invoices from an email inbox and web application into DocuWare, or uses scanning and optical character recognition (OCR) to process paper delivery notes. The company can now validate items with just a few clicks using DocuWare, with automated matching of invoices, delivery notes, and POs to verify amounts and identify discrepancies in quantities, prices, VAT rates, and vendor rebates.

SALUS now stores all incoming and outgoing financial and GxP documentation in DocuWare, including approximately 3,500 new invoices and 3,500 delivery notes each month.

The interfaces with Microsoft Dynamics enable automatic archiving for documents generated in the ERP system; conversely, users can pull information from the ERP system into DocuWare to create outbound POs and invoices, without having to download entire files. SALUS also uses DocuWare to support its warehousing operations, with dedicated folders for documents relating to each pharmaceutical company that stores inventory at its locations.

Eva Mihelčič comments: "Working with Vibor and DocuWare was excellent: they provided many great ideas and solutions to address our industry-specific requirements. For example, Vibor integrated VIDsigner from Validated ID, an electronic signature tool that enables us to manage contract approvals through DocuWare in a fully compliant way."

BENEFITS

The introduction of DocuWare has had a hugely positive impact at SALUS, as Eva Mihelčič confirms: "Key financial document management processes are running at least 20 percent faster than before. For example, our employees now validate invoices and POs within 30 seconds in DocuWare, rather than having to spend several hours painstakingly checking documents for errors."

Throughout SALUS, streamlined digital workflows have significantly reduced the level of manual working—helping to cut the risk of human error during data entry and preventing delays as documents pass through the company to relevant stakeholders. Similarly, SALUS has simplified contract approvals: instead of paper documents and manual sign-offs, users simply upload contracts to DocuWare, which notifies internal and external approvers and allows them to authorise remotely using the integrated VIDsigner solution.

Eva Mihelčič adds: "Our finance team really appreciates how quick and easy document retrieval has become with DocuWare. To locate specific items using our older processes, we had to drill down in our ERP system or search through various folders in the old document management system. With DocuWare, we can run a quick keyword-based search, click on a document, and see all the related documents as well."

This enhanced search function makes completing audits much simpler, too. When SALUS receives a request from auditors or regulators for sample documents, users simply filter and pull all relevant items in DocuWare in an instant—rather than locating them one-by-one in the ERP or document management system as before.

"The efficiency gains that we have achieved with DocuWare translate into much higher productivity across our finance team. We now have more time and resources available to concentrate on our core responsibilities managing the financial activities of multiple SALUS Group companies," comments Eva Mihelčič.

> With DocuWare, we enjoy continuous enhancements informed by feedback from its worldwide client base. We have many ideas for new features and functionality, and we know that Vibor and DocuWare will be open to our suggestions and help us to implement the improvements.
>
> *Eva Mihelčič, Finance Director at SALUS,*
>
> *Veletrgovina, d.o.o.*

The move to DocuWare is also helping SALUS to track its financial obligations. A customised query in the solution enables monitoring of invoices approaching their due date; at this point, users can remind approvers to make payments on time—helping to build trusted relationships with suppliers.

Furthermore, SALUS is now in a better position to meet regulatory compliance objectives, as Eva Mihelčič explains: "DocuWare is fully authorised by the document archive authorities here in Slovenia, and we are in the process of having our workflows certified, too. These steps will help us to build credibility with our industry partners and customers, who are continuously assessing the robustness of our processes."

SALUS has recently completed an upgrade of DocuWare, making improvements to workflows for the management of services invoices and POs, issued guarantees, and more.

Eva Mihelčič concludes: "With DocuWare, we enjoy continuous enhancements informed by feedback from its worldwide client base. We have many ideas for new features and functionality, and we know that Vibor and DocuWare will be open to our suggestions and help us to implement the improvements. Using DocuWare has been a huge success for us, and we look forward to the next stage in our partnership."

ABOUT RICOH

Ricoh is empowering digital workplaces using innovative technologies and services, thus enabling individuals to work smarter. With cultivated knowledge and organisational capabilities nurtured over its 85 years' history, Ricoh is a leading provider of document management solutions, IT services, communications services, commercial and industrial printing, digital cameras, and industrial systems.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh Group has major operations throughout the world and its products and services now reach customers in approximately 200 countries and regions. In the financial year ended March 2021, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 1,682 billion yen (approx. 15.1 billion USD).

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