

Cardinia gone live with Automatic invoice matching and payment.

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As part of the expansion of services on offer at the Digitisation Centre operated by eCloud we have recently gone live with the automatic processing and payment of invoices. This may sound reasonable standard but the technology rolled out to deliver this solution could be challenging the traditional role of Accounts Payable as a processing centre.

From previous posts, people may be aware eCloud offers significant operational efficiencies which are made possible through eCloud's innovative inbound mail processing services and AP processing technology.

We previously went live with all Mail received by Council, this mail is now run through multiple algorithms developed by eCloud that read, assess and then allocate mail into the document management system, creating workflows as needed by identifying the appropriate officer within Council to action the matter. We estimate we are now saving 60 hours of work per week, in addition to reducing the cost to process mail and generally improved the quality of our data.

The second stage contained lessons similar to a previous post I wrote on paper independence involving the transition for process worker to knowledge worker but in this case within our accounts payable staff. To provide an understanding of the dynamics of change and how it impacts staff, I will write more on this in an upcoming post.

The second stage has been live for over a week and we have already hit the milestone of having 50% of our invoices processed directly into our Finance System. The process is similar to our inbound mail in that all invoices electronic or paper are scanned into the eCloud software and run through algorithms that read, assess and then allocate invoice to various queues. If the invoice match the PO and the goods are receipted it goes straight to a payment queue, if it matches and has no goods receipt the invoice is sent to the relevant area and prompted to be receipted and if no PO exists it goes to an exception queue. The advanced features within the eCloud software is that once an error is identified and corrected by accounts payable the system is learning how invoices from that supplier are processed and it will self-correct on the next invoice. There are many other learnings in the software but I will leave that to the technical people.

We started with 20% of the invoices matching and within a week are upto 50%, the machine really is learning. In going live we put our faith in eCloud

to deliver as our test environment was not the most stable but I am happy to say the trust was well placed.

One of the items I say to the staff with corporate services is around risk and risk management, prior to going live we put the controls in place to identify issues quickly and this gave the staff and the organisation the confidence to press the go button.

On our standard agenda within the corporate services team we have the following so people are constantly reminded it is OK to fail.

“Stagnation is usually the precursor to deterioration, if we don’t allow some failure in the equation, we’re not going to have people do things that are risky and unique or that are unique and original and if we wait for certainty, we will almost always be too late.”

I think in this instance we put the words into action.

Submitted by: Ruth Edge – Cardinia Shire Council