

How to successfully lead a project with less ressources

The ultimate guide



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Make your expense claim processes more efficient

A revolution for employees and finance!

01. Simplify expense reports

For a long time, company employees sent in their expense claims on paper. The whole process of sending, checking, reimbursing and archiving them took a considerable amount of time. Managing and centralizing all this data required additional effort.

It is imperative that organizations work to simplify employee tasks. When it comes to expense claims, there are many unnecessary or low value-added tasks that can be simplified.

On the employee's side, not having to store receipts nor creating expense reports is a perk that allows you to focus on what matters the most: your projects. On the management control side, all verification, storage and reimbursement work can be simplified and automated to the next level.

Everyone can make expense claims on the go, on the tip of their smartphone for instance. If your management solution allows it, then it is no longer necessary to keep the receipts. This time-saving feature contributes to the satisfaction of employees, who are spared non-value-added tasks. Support teams, who can now also avoid having to process paper invoices and receipts, also benefit greatly from the dematerialization of this process.

No more paper expense reports also means no more trips to the photocopier to keep a copy of receipts, nor having the need for a folder to carry out with you to store all of them. There is no doubt that there won't be any nostalgia in dematerializing the entire expense management process.



02.

Simplify the process through OCR



What is OCR?

This is a technology that reads data from a file, such as a pdf or a photo, and places it in the appropriate fields. This self-learning technology reads the data taken from a photo when creating an expense claim, and automatically enters the fields (amount, date, VAT) without the employee having to do anything. In addition to the convenience this brings, it also saves time.

Once the expenses have been entered as they come in, it's up to you to determine the right validation circuit: one step or several? The employee's manager or the project manager at the front line? Each company needs to think about what makes the most sense to check this control point, without burdening employees' tasks.

- Scan your receipts from an app that supports OCR technology
- Anywhere, anytime
- Automatic information filling
- Single or multiple expense claims
- Send by workflow for validation

With OCR

- Keep track of your travel expenses
- Process your requests
- Simplify the process

The benefits

- Centralized digital expense reports
- Visibility of costs and their impact on project margins
- Simplified validation workflow as expenses bill are routed to the project managers
- Time saving

03.

Switch to probative value

Storage with probative value is a method of storing expenses that allows you to completely dematerialize the expense claim process. In addition to actively helping to protect the environment by limiting your use of paper, total dematerialization saves employees an enormous amount of time, as they no longer have to scan their receipts nor keep the originals as they travel. This archiving has evidential value, since these receipts photos are proof materials for any authority check. Make sure to check the probative valuability of these digital invoices before getting rid of the originals ahead of time to protect your business.

A software or application dedicated to the

digitalization of expense claims enables you to enter all the information needed to justify your expenses. Once submitted, the expense claim receives a stamp certifying its date and validity, before being stored on your company's behalf, within a storage timeframe that complies with legal and tax requirements.

This means that the associated workload, control and space requirements are no longer borne by you, but by the service provider.

The use of a software capable of certifying and storing data with probative value offers many advantages for your organization: time-saving for employees, time-saving

for management controllers, less overwhelming paper use, freeing up the storage space, and reinforced internal control.

All these advantages mean a high return on investment, as the cost of implementing such a solution remains relatively low.

What it brings you:

- Better monitoring of the impact of costs on project performance and profitability,
- Visibility on the expenses status,
- Find out whether validated billable expenses have been billed,
- Re-billable costs: these fees have no impact on on the global project budget. They can be re-billed on an actual or flat-rate basis, and are therefore reimbursable. Set up a mechanism so that you don't forget to re-invoice before closing the project to maintain traceability.
- Non-rechargeable costs: These have an impact on the project. That's why the project's profitability must take them into account in the calculation.

Once the validation of expense claims is complete, it is essential to set up a report to transmit the data to payroll using a «ready-to-go» file.

Automate the accounting closings procedure

01.

Accounting document transmission

You need to be able to easily and automatically transmit all types of documents to your accountant for closing and payroll purposes, such as :

- sales journals
- invoice files
- expense reports
- payroll variables

Sales journals

They provide all the billing details at a sufficiently detailed level to be used for accounting purposes. Your invoicing tool should be able to generate them automatically, ideally in the import format of your accounting solution.

Two possible situations:

- the extractions are adapted to the import format of your accounting software for a quick and easy transfer
- an API integration automates the transfer between the two softwares

Payroll variables

- Absences: if leave is managed in a different solution to payroll, simply transmit an extraction that can be imported into the payroll tool.
- The same goes for expenses: a precise data transfer via Excel satisfies the accountants, who have all the information at hand.

Data to be sent for payroll purposes:

- absences
- expenses to be reimbursed
- the status of meal vouchers
- any bonuses and variables

ERPs and payroll software are always best connected by API. Check out what can be done with the solutions you choose. If they don't exist, they can be developed.

Invoice files

You need to be able to easily generate all invoice files, either in PDF or Word format for a smooth transmission to the accountant, at the end of the quarter or at the end of the fiscal year.

02.

Manage cut-offs to make exercises safer

The closing of accounts marks the definitive end of an accounting period and the start of the next financial year. Depending on the company, closing can be monthly, quarterly or annual. It's often a complex and time-consuming process, but with the right tools, the job can be greatly simplified.

Set an exercise period

Depending on your fiscal period, you need to implement a closing process. First, make sure to set a definitive date after which collaborators can no longer modify data (timesheets, expenses, and other purchases). This allows you to close and freeze the period, and to ensure that any modifications fall into the next fiscal period. This cut-off should prevent any changes by people who do not own the rights, so that only authorized individuals can make adjustments

Ideally, your management solution allows you to manage these cut-offs directly.

Generate the accounting closure in a detailed system

Once the financial years have been frozen with cut-offs, you can extract your data. If your solution allows you to track activity, it must also enable you to generate a closing at the desired frequency, detailing :

- sales by project
- percentage of project completion
- costs to date and to completion
- detailed income statement
- the calculation of EFA (Estimated Final Amounts) and CPA (Cost Performance Analysis)

This system provides you with an accurate, detailed database. This gives you the opportunity to compare performance with objectives.



Simplify your business by integrating your processes

Less software = higher efficiency

With the multiplication of digital tools, it can be tricky to find your way around. You need to find a way of unifying your various processes as far as possible, to gain in efficiency and optimize your performance.

01.

Schedule staffing right from the pre-sales phase

Your sales team :

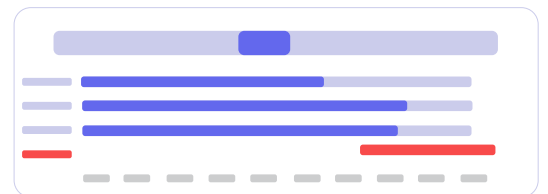
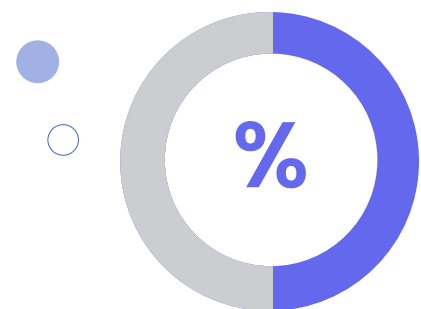
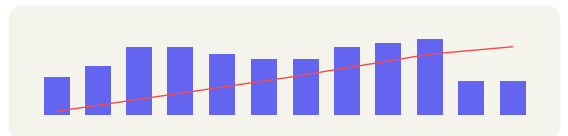
- follow customer relationship management in CRM
- identify opportunities and follow the sales cycle
- enable managers to anticipate projects: clarify needs to identify aligned profiles

Successful organizations are those that keep a step ahead. Visibility enables them to react more quickly.

It's important to define a trigger that allows opportunities that are close to succeed to be taken into account in workload planning and management. The best service companies plan workloads by scripting pre-sales.



At what point do you start planning the workload for an opportunity: when it has a 70% chance of success? 80%? 90% ?



Therefore, when you make your staffing decisions, you arbitrate by taking into account all the parameters: projects in progress and sold, opportunities about to be won, internal projects, etc.

Depending on the case, you may decide to ignore certain parameters, such as internal projects that may be put aside for the time being.

02.

Use staffing to refine your financial forecast

If your staffing is well done, it should automatically give you the sales and margin you're going to achieve over the coming months. In fact, by positioning the workload of your employees and your subcontracting purchases, you have all the elements you need for an accurate forecast: for projects sold on a fixed-price basis, this enables you to calculate progress and future costs. For projects sold on a time-and-materials basis, simply multiply the workload by the Daily Rates to anticipate sales, and deduct the associated Daily Costs.

That's why it's important for project managers to keep project staffing up to date, to provide management with an accurate picture.

Leave management linked to resource scheduling

03.

When you're looking for profiles to position on a project, you need to have all the information up to date. And if you don't have an overview of absences, you're missing out on a crucial element in this profile search.

Options to link the leave management to the staffing:

- You want to keep your leave management solution, and use an API or flat file to upload it to your staffing tool.
Advantages :
 - the operating mode remains the same
- You choose a single environment that handles workload and leave management with native integration, and then send payroll variables directly to your payroll solution.
Advantages :
 - a single environment for employees (excluding HR) for greater simplicity.
 - real-time availability updates

04.

Expense management linked to margin monitoring and invoicing

Project margins incorporate more than internal staff costs. There are often other types of costs: subcontracting, product purchases, and expenses of various kinds, including travel and catering.

When expenses can be re-invoiced on an actual basis, the impact is neutral for the margin. But it is important to include all of the other fees into the margin calculation formula.

When an expense is reported by an employee, it is essential to :

- define which project is going to be charged
- indicate whether this is a chargeback or not
- indicate the nature of the charge for analytical monitoring

Ideally, your expense solution is connected to :

- your project profitability management
- your billing system
- your accounting solution (expense reports)
- your payroll solution (reimbursements)

It is often challenging to effectively connect this expense management solution, hence the importance of having a native integration that provides for the correct calculation of profitability, as well as an automatic re-invoicing of billable expenses.

Sending expense reports to payroll and accounting solutions can be done through flat files (Excel) if there is no API created between your software systems.

Finally, tracking the re-invoicing of billable expenses is important to avoid forgetting to actually re-invoice them.

When there are many billable expenses and the processes are not sufficiently well-defined, many billable expenses fall through the cracks due to a lack of tracking. This is a direct loss for the company that can easily be avoided.



Automate the billing operation

How to save time while improving cash flow?

The billing process is often complex and time-consuming. These numerous tasks prevent focusing on ensuring that customers payments are recieved.

Creating payment schedules, preparing invoices, issuing, sending, checking for unpaid bills, following up with clients... All these tasks are often handled manually, while they could be fully automated.

Moreover, billing must remain a collaborative process: project managers are the first to know when a deliverable is up for an invoice to be triggered. They are the ones who can confirm the man/days to be billed.

The billing process must be organized very clearly, with perfectly defined roles and accesses that leave no room for doubt. Everything that can be automated should be.



The possible areas for automation:

1. Automatic notification sent to the billing manager when a deliverable that triggers an invoice is completed
2. Automatic generation of invoices based on the time spent and confirmed over a given period
3. Mass sending of invoices by email to recipients
4. Automatic uploading of invoices on client platforms
5. Notification in case of unpaid invoice
6. Automatic email reminders in case of unpaid invoices



The advantages of automating the billing process are numerous:



Significant time savings that lead to substantial cost savings. Complete automation can save 2 full-time employee days per month.



More effective internal control: automated processes reduce the risk of human error in this critical process.



Improved cash flow: invoices are triggered more quickly, payments are collected faster. This is positive for cash flow!

The challenges of automation include:

Billing at a fixed rate

The deadlines are defined at the start of the project. They can be linked to forecasted dates or to the completion of deliverables. In both cases, collaboration must be streamlined between the project manager, who is the closest to the field, and the billing managers. Adjusting a deadline or automatically notifying when a deliverable is completed allows for a clear forecast and triggers billing as early as possible, resulting in a positive impact on the cash flow.

Billing based on time spent (time and materials)

In the case of time-based billing, the challenge is to save time and ensure that only billable hours can be invoiced. Therefore, the time entry process often involves validation. Only validated hours should be used to create the invoice. The use of an integrated tool between time tracking and billing helps automating and securing this process. A well-organized workflow that allows the project manager to prepare the invoice before the issuing team generates it can greatly enhance efficiency.

Subscription

The challenge in cases of recurring invoices is to simplify its preparation by only having to set up the deadlines once and ensuring that the invoices are generated automatically each month. Mass emailing also helps saving a substantial amount of time.

How to customize your invoice templates?

A quotation, like an invoice, contributes to your company's image. It is an official document that should reflect the professionalism of your company, meet your clients' expectations, and eliminate any uncertainty regarding amounts and payment deadlines.

Creating reusable templates that are tailored to different types of clients and projects allows you to address this issue more effectively. Once the templates are created, all that's left is to fill in the invoices with your data.

Here are the mandatory details that must appear on your invoices:

- Invoice date
- Invoice number
- Service provided
- Your identity (name, SIREN, address)
- Purchase order number (if applicable)
- Seller's VAT identification number
- Description and breakdown of the products sold

Saving time with bulk invoicing:

Bulk invoicing is a feature of billing softwares that allows you to select a specific period, such as the previous month, and view all the invoice drafts ready to be generated such as:

- Deadlines for the period
- Time and rate details for the invoices on a time and material basis

It is extremely easy to review all these invoices, make necessary modifications, and then generate all of them instantly. You can even automatically send them by email for those that can be sent electronically.

The time savings are particularly significant.

Challenges of automating debt collection reminders:

Unfortunately, not all clients are prompt payers. It regularly happens that invoices go unpaid.

Better cash flow management involves having a clear and consistently applied process in such cases. Clients need to be reminded because often it's not intentional, and a simple reminder can trigger payment on the client's side.

Ideally, you establish an automated reminder system. Email templates are created, and a sequence is prepared by placing these templates one after the other and configuring the number of days between each email. This is incredibly effective in improving your cash flow.





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performance?**

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