

Case Study | Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP



“Through Chrome River, capturing value added tax (VAT) alone has generated significant savings. Reclaimable tax on expenses is up in excess of 12% after the first year.”

INDUSTRY: Legal EMPLOYEES: 800+ Lawyers PRODUCT: EXPENSE and INVOICE

Automating a Manual Process

Prior to automating its expense reporting and invoice processing, employees at Berwin Leighton Paisner (BLP) were using Excel spread sheets to record their expenses. They taped their receipts on sheets of paper, stapled them to the Excel sheet and hand routed them for approval. Then the Accounts Payable department would manually enter the spread sheets into the Elite Financial Management System. Not only was this time consuming, but the spread sheets weren't always completed properly or appropriately signed. There were **many errors due to manual input**, and there was a lack of VAT recovery.

Why Chrome River?

Through recommendations, both Concur and Chrome River were suggested as suitable solutions. After performing due diligence on both solutions and companies, ultimately BLP selected Chrome River EXPENSE and INVOICE to fulfill its automation requirements. **The selection team had a preference for Chrome River's simple user interface**, its background and knowledge of the Elite Financial Management System, ability to easily integrate with Elite, Blade, Opes, Reed & MacKay Travel, its background with law firms and ultimately, the Chrome River team. The selection team that made the final decision to implement Chrome River was made up of Ross Macdonald, Cash Operations Manager, the Head of Finance and the Finance Systems Manager.

Company Profile

Berwin Leighton Paisner LLP has over 800 lawyers, partners, consultants and paralegals in 12 offices around the globe that service more than 70 areas of law in 130 countries. BLP is ranked in the top five most innovative law firms in Europe by the Financial Times for delivering client solutions such as: Integrated Client Service Model; Streamline – BLP's proprietary legal service improvement service; Integrated Dispute Resolution capability; and Lawyers On Demand. Its clients include over 50 Global Fortune 500 or FTSE 100 companies and over half of the world's top 20 banks.

blplaw.com

“Its expense and invoice management processes had become too time-consuming, at times inaccurate and incomplete, and riddled with human errors.”

Phased Implementation and Training

INVOICE, EXPENSE and PRE-APPROVAL were implemented at the same time. It was, and still is, a phased rollout to implement different regions around the world. The first implementation was in the UK, followed by Belgium, UAE and Asia. Currently Germany is in the implementation process and then ultimately Moscow.

For the first month, the Accounts Payable team duplicated manual work within Chrome River to create a live test environment. It then selected the corporate team to be the pilot group for a month before starting the wider rollout.

Classroom style training was managed by Finance, and was compulsory for all secretarial and administrative staff with optional approver testing. Training documents were attached to the main Chrome River dashboard for user reference once the training was completed.

Initially, a few of the secretaries felt there was more work pushed onto their plates. But, by the end of the training sessions, they took away the benefit of automation and the time and cost savings that are associated with automation.

“INVOICE, EXPENSE and PRE-APPROVAL were implemented at the same time through a phased rollout to accommodate different regions around the world.”

Goal

Find an expense reporting and invoice processing solution that automated the manual workflow processes, increased accuracy, reduced human errors, and recovered VAT.

BLP also wanted a solution that provided more granular reporting data, which it could use to review internal business policies to ensure they are written to meet the requirements of the firm.

Why Chrome River?

The selection team had a preference for Chrome River’s simple user interface, its background and knowledge of the Thomson Reuters Elite Financial Management System, ability to easily integrate with Elite and other technologies, its background with law firms and ultimately, the Chrome River team - which is the singular main reason that BLP believes in the product.

Real Benefits

Initially the benefits were visibility to costs, gaining appropriate levels of approval and greater control around behaviors, and compliance to business rules. By the software forcing higher quality data to be assigned to the appropriate allocation codes, BLP has been able to reduce write-offs. It has also been able to extract data from the software to assist in reporting, such as for the revenue in the form of PSA. Reporting is much more granular now that there is a history in the Chrome River software and reporting levels are much broader than when extracting data directly from the Elite Financial Management System. A history in Chrome River and more granular reporting has provided BLP with the data they need to review its internal business policies to ensure they are written to meet the real requirements of the firm.

“The benefits were visibility to costs, appropriate levels of approval and greater control around behaviors, and compliance to business rules.”

Staff Efficiencies and Cost Savings

There was a reduction in contract staff within the Accounts Payable Cashiers group, which was partially due to automation. Significant cost savings came from VAT reclaim. The reclaimable tax on expenses was up in excess of 12% after the first year.

“Contract staff was reduced within the AP Cashier team prior to full implementation.”

Benefits

By the software forcing higher quality data to be assigned to the appropriate allocation codes, BLP has been able to reduce write-offs.

Ongoing Support after Rollout

BLP's project manager provided invaluable support and ideas to the team during the implementation process. As the BLP team has become more experienced users, they have moved away from working with its project manager to working with [Chrome River Support](#).

Chrome River continuously rolls out new features to improve the software. BLP found this to be a bit challenging, but the result is reward and satisfaction from improving the firm's processes in conjunction with Chrome River's release of new features. Ultimately, BLP feels the Chrome River team is great and extremely helpful – which is the singular main reason that BLP believes in the product. It makes the investment in time to implement and support the product well worthwhile.

Life after Automation

BLP wants to dig into [Chrome River ANALYTICS](#), which will allow them to add more value to the business by providing current and accurate information around budgets, trends and patterns.

BLP is also looking forward to the benefits they can receive from Chrome River's newly appointed role of SVP Customer Success. To have a team [review its usage and make suggestions on how to better utilize Chrome River](#) will be another advantage.