

# ANYDOC®INVOICE HELPS NORTHEAST UTILITIES CONSERVE ENERGY WHEN PROCESSING INVOICES

## At A Glance

### NORTHEAST UTILITIES

#### Industry

Utilities

#### Challenge

The combination of NU's manual data entry processes and the sheer volume of invoices it receives every day had caused a backlog of 3 to 4 weeks, leading to mushrooming HR expenses and inefficient AP processing.

#### Solution

NU adopted AnyDocINVOICE to automate its AP process, freeing up resources sooner and streamlining the process of getting critical data into its backend systems.

#### Benefits

- Backlog was reduced by more than 90%.
- Instead of hiring 5 additional data entry operators as planned, NU reassigned 4 of its existing team to more business-critical tasks, saving the company \$240,000 in labor costs.
- Vendors can now utilize NU's invoice retrieval system, which has cut down on calls to the help desk and improved vendor relations.

#### Future

- NU's Conservation and Load Management department is considering using the software for some of its forms.
- NU is looking into using the software to process time sheets for employees out in the field.

If you've ever gone without electricity because of a storm or a downed power line, you know firsthand how important it is for your utility company to run like a well-oiled machine. And as we've seen in some of the more recent disasters that have dotted the world's landscape, the efficiency of a utility service provider's operations could even mean the difference between life and death. Northeast Utilities Service Company (NU) takes that responsibility very seriously. As the provider of energy products and services for more than two million businesses and residences in the Northeastern U.S., it is always on the prowl to find ways to streamline its operations and maximize its efforts.

### The Challenge

Carrying responsibility for six electric and two natural gas companies, the Berlin, Conn.-based Fortune 500 conglomerate found itself expending too much of its own energy processing the 300,000 invoices it receives annually from its many vendors — half of which are paper. They estimated that 98% of their processing costs came from labor alone. Out of a staff of 21 in the Accounts Payable (AP) department, 10 were dedicated to keying data from invoices, and there were imminent plans to hire five more employees to accommodate the growth they were experiencing.



*“Not only was their AP paper workflow expensive, it was also slow..”*

Contributing to their mushrooming processing costs was NU's labor-intensive manual data entry process. In addition to the cost of manually keying information from their incoming invoices, they were absorbing the significant cost associated with paper shuffling as their invoices passed from one hand to another.

Not only was their AP paper workflow expensive, it was also slow and could prove unwieldy during peak times. After each invoice was opened in the mailroom, it had to be sorted by type, bundled into groups of 25, routed to a data entry clerk, matched to the purchase order (if there was one), manually keyed in, assigned a barcode separator page, scanned, funneled to their backend system and filed.

### The Solution

Clement Lewis, NU's manager of AP and inventory accounting, spent two years investigating AnyDoc Software's automated document processing and data capture solution. He also contacted several other companies to find the one that would best meet NU's processing needs.

Lewis and his team compared each company's offerings and performed parallel testing with actual NU invoices. In the end, they selected AnyDoc Software's AnyDocINVOICE, offered by the Connecticut-based reseller Imaging Solutions, because it provided the most robust solution for their needs.



The wings that give flight to AnyDocINVOICE is AnyDoc's AnyApp™ technology. AnyApp locates data on template-resistant forms, regardless of where it resides on the document, by searching for defined data labels (e.g., "amount due" and "invoice number"), data format, data type such as alpha, numeric or both, or location (e.g., "just look in the top half of the document for this data"). To achieve maximum throughput efficiency, the software "memorizes" the locations of the data for that particular vendor, so it can capture the data faster the next time it processes that vendor's invoice.

Once the data is captured, AnyDocINVOICE goes through a vigorous validation process, where it first normalizes the data. For example, the software will align items such as dates and dollar figures with the format required by their backend databases. It also automatically checks the data against NU's business rules, ensuring that the checks and balances set up by NU remain intact.

Another validation feature of AnyDocINVOICE is its ability to perform two-way checking against external databases (to verify due amounts, PO numbers, payment terms, etc.) and dynamically cull out additional details from the database to add to the data file. So instead of extracting a vendor's address every time, the software can use a vendor ID or PO number to retrieve address information from their vendor database and populate those fields. Only after

*"AnyDocINVOICE goes through a vigorous validation process..."*

the data has been sufficiently scrubbed for accuracy and format is it ready to be imported into an AP system or backend database.

In NU's case, they needed the invoice number, invoice date, purchase order number, as well as tax, freight, and total due amounts harvested from their invoices and transferred into their AP system for payment processing and document retrieval purposes. Wynne Cerone, vice president of operations for reseller Imaging Solutions, and her team worked closely with NU to ensure the AnyDocINVOICE solution seamlessly integrated with their existing business processes, eliminating the need for NU to change the way they did business simply due to a software implementation.

## The Benefits

AnyDocINVOICE has both simplified and accelerated the processing of NU's invoices. For starters, instead of keying data into their system, processors only verify characters that have been flagged by the software as questionable. And instead of printing a barcode page for each invoice, they now print an identifier — called a patch code — for an entire batch of invoices, saving both time and money in the process.

"The implementation of OCR has been a tremendous asset to NU. Our number of days to process an invoice dropped precipitously, even after we reduced our processing staff by 40%."

**– Clement Lewis, Manager of AP & Inventory Accounting, Northeast Utilities**

The payoff? It now takes less than two hours to process one day's worth of invoices. Louise Jacques, business analyst for NU, experienced this firsthand when she helped out the department recently. "I scanned about three days' worth of work in two hours," she recalls. "What a difference. That would've taken us a few days before — easily!"

With an efficient system in place, NU's backlog also shrunk from **22 to just three days**, four during peak times: a staggering 90% decrease. And instead of increasing its labor costs by hiring an additional five employees to whittle away at its mound of invoices, NU **actually reduced its number of processors by four**, reassigning them to more business-critical accounting functions.

*"... their backlog also shrunk from 22 to just three days..."*

Another unexpected boon was that vendors began taking advantage of their invoice retrieval system to check on the status of their payment. They had the system in place before, but vendors weren't using it because of the time it took to get invoices into the system. With vendors checking on the status of their payments online, NU has been able to reduce the number of calls to its help desk and improve vendor relations.

Lewis is impressed by the results. "The implementation of OCR has been a tremendous asset to NU," he remarks. "Our number of days to process an invoice dropped precipitously, even after we reduced our processing staff by 40%"

## Partner Profile

### Imaging Solutions

As an experienced systems integrator and custom software developer, Imaging Solutions serves local to international clients with best-in-class Enterprise Content Management software, scanners and storage devices, design and implementation services, system training and on-going support.

To learn more about Imaging Solutions, visit [www.imagingsolutions.com](http://www.imagingsolutions.com).

### The Future

NU management is exploring future plans to broaden its implementation of AnyDoc Software's automated document processing and data capture solution beyond the borders of its AP department. Staff from NU's Conservation and Load Management department have expressed interest in using the software to automate their processing of applications they receive for some of their community outreach programs. There has also been some talk about NU using the software to process the time sheets that come from employees in the field.

The sky's the limit for NU in terms of the multiplicity of ways AnyDoc's offerings could be leveraged to obtain comparable results in other departments. Jacques is confident that the technology could do for others what it has done for their AP department. "We worked long and hard tweaking the system to our requirements, but the benefits are really paying off now," reminisces Jacques. "I just can't say enough about the software. It has worked out tremendously for us."

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# Complete Line of Products

AnyDoc Software has been developing award-winning document, data capture, and classification solutions since 1989. Thousands of companies worldwide rely on AnyDoc solutions to eliminate millions of hours of manual data entry while improving productivity and accuracy. Our products and solutions all operate from the ease-of-use, stability, and enhanced functionality obtained from years of experience and innovation.

## Products

**OCR for AnyDoc®** : Automatically capture data from nearly any business document. Eliminate the costs and errors associated with manual data entry.

**Infiniworx®** : Simplify and automate how your company processes documents with this innovative drag-and-drop workflow development platform.

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**AnyDoc®INVOICE™** : Automatically process invoices to lower manual data entry costs and turn incoming invoices around in hours instead of days.

**AnyDoc®REMIT™** : Automatically capture remittances and checks and the associated critical data for much quicker input into your financial or ERP systems.

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