Customer **Story**

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin Achieves Efficiency and Full Visibility with OnBase® for Accounts Payable

OBJECTIVES

+ Reduce manual steps
+ Increase process efficiency
+ Go paperless
+ Provide full visibility into the process
+ Gain a robust audit trail

RESULTS

+ An upgraded interface
+ Time savings
+ Easier transparency for stakeholders
+ Improved control and transparency
+ A more centralized process
+ Increased efficiency and reduced paper use
+ Real-time access to financial data and enhanced visibility
+ A smoother vendor and employee experience

"

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (DFW) had spent years dealing with challenges related to their highly manual accounts payable (AP) process.

About

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin is a farmer-funded and farmer-directed non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and marketing Wisconsin dairy products. It funds dairy-related research and provides programs that enhance the competitiveness of the Wisconsin dairy industry. Established in 1983, the Madison, Wisconsin-based organization now has about 55 employees and continues to be instrumental in sustaining the dairy legacy in Wisconsin and supporting dairy farmers and their families.

The Challenge

Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (DFW) had spent years dealing with challenges related to their highly manual accounts payable (AP) process. Given their reliance on paper and email-based invoices, the inefficiencies of the process made it extremely time-consuming for DFW's AP staff. And even though they had implemented OnBase in the early 2000s, it had only been used for document storage and records management. As a result, all invoices were eventually imported into OnBase after they were paid, but they weren't trackable until then, severely limiting process visibility.

But things came to a head in 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic required

"

As a smaller company and AP department, DFW didn't have an on-site OnBase administrator, and they outsourced IT. That's why DFW decided to team up with Naviant as their digital transformation partner.

DFW to transition to a primarily remote workforce virtually overnight. This sudden change forced the DFW AP team to develop what they now call a "makeshift accounts payable workflow" made up of a combination of Adobe PDFs and emails. That meant that Bonnita Denson, DFW's Accounting Specialist, had to manually manipulate every invoice and piece of backup documentation to create PDF copies.

Then, the PDFs were manually emailed to staff one at a time for approval before being routed to the finance department to perform protocols like processing in their financial system, Great Plains, and signing checks. To indicate approvals, they relied on attached emails and stamps that Bonnita created to fill in all relevant financial information. Finally, the invoices and related documentation were exported and indexed into OnBase for storage, just as they had pre-2020. Bonnita said, "It was a lot of invoice babysitting, and I had to do it because if I didn't watch them closely, something could have gotten lost."

While this process technically got the job done, it created vulnerabilities related to the multiple touches each invoice received, the lack of an easy invoice tracking system for outstanding invoices, the vulnerable internal controls, and the high risk for data entry duplications. It also was extremely time-consuming for Bonnita and meant that documents weren't accessible to non-finance staff until the end of the process. And it certainly didn't solve any of the problems the process had pre-2020.

It was it me for a change, so DFW's AP team evaluated various solutions, including Adobe, Concur, Sign Now, OnBase, and their existing accounting system's workflow. Multiple of these solutions were related to systems or applications they were already using, which was a priority for them to ease implementation and the user experience. They also wanted a solution that could integrate seamlessly with their financial system, Great Plains.

DFW chose to extend its OnBase solution to include AP automation. The team saw OnBase as the best option available while still being approachable for a smaller company like theirs. They had already enjoyed using OnBase for document storage since the early 2000s and had previously considered expanding it to include AP automation. But when they went remote and found themselves with reduced finance and IT staff, they knew the investment would be worth it now.

The Solution

As a smaller company and AP department, DFW didn't have an on-site OnBase administrator, and they outsourced IT. That's why DFW decided to team up with Naviant as their digital transformation partner. As a result, DFW was able to combine its forces with the Naviant team's technical expertise

and experience in implementing similar solutions, making DFW's vision within reach. DFW also decided to make a Unity Client upgrade a part of their project. And just eight months after implementation began, the solution was complete and included features like:

Outlook Integration

OnBase is now integrated with Outlook for the intake of invoices and approval notifications and reminders. It also connects with their financial system to eliminate duplicate entry of data and automate indexing. Staff can also import purchase orders using Document Import, flag secure invoices to maintain confidentiality, and track down documents that the department needs to pay sales and use taxes on.

Seamless Integration with Financial Systems

OnBase Unity centralized all AP processes, allowing for automatic integration with DFW's financial system, Great Plains. This integration has meant that invoices, purchase orders, and backup documentation were accessible in one place. It has also facilitated a smoother flow of financial information overall.

Email Notifications

The system also has email notification capabilities, which keep the process moving with minimal intervention. Bonnita said, "The system lets relevant employees know immediately that they have an invoice waiting for them to approve, which is really nice. I don't have to bother people anymore." These notifications are convenient for approvers, too. Each notification has a link to OnBase, where the viewer can access everything associated with the invoice in question, from the purchase order to the documentation and contract. It's all just a couple of clicks away.

Robust Audit Trail

OnBase provides a strong audit trail for the entire AP process. As a result, all documentation can easily be found in a single centralized location. This feature has gone a Long way in ensuring compliance and supporting internal controls.

Sales Tax Tracking

DFW also implemented sales tax tracking. Tami Syse, DFW's Manager of Accounting said, "We never had that before, we made copies. So now, we have it where we can mark invoices if we need to pay Tracy sales or use tax."

The Difference

OnBase has truly changed the way DFW does business, offering them numerous benefits like:

"

The system lets relevant employees know immediately that they have an invoice waiting for them to approve, which is really nice. I don't have to bother people anymore.

Bonnita Denson, *Accounting Specialist,* DFW

> OnBase has brought a lot of time-savings. When it comes to the January-February time frame, it has historically always gotten extra tight in time. Two years ago, before OnBase, I remember I was stressed to the max. I was afraid I wasn't going to be able to get AP done, along with 1099s or personal property taxes. But last year, since we had OnBase on board, I didn't feel that stress, and I remember saying, 'It's because I just have time.'

Bonnita Denson, *Accounting Specialist,* DFW

An Upgraded Interface

In addition to all the benefits AP automation itself offered, DFW enjoyed a more user-friendly interface than they were used to when their OnBase system was only used for document storage. And that was thanks to the Unity Client. Tracy Engbloom, Director of Financial Information, said, "We upgraded to Unity. Before, we were on an older platform, so staff especially appreciated its new look and feel."

Time Savings

When it comes to time savings, Bonnita no longer has to repeatedly create PDFs, which has saved tremendous time. She doesn't have to spend her days babysitting invoices to prevent their getting lost, either. She said, "With Unity, the invoice is there, and I don't have to worry about it. Nobody can delete it unless they're in finance. So that's really nice."

And now that purchase orders are automatically printed to OnBase once they're approved, Bonnita no longer has to perform this task manually. This wasn't just a win for Bonnita either, as Tracy noted, "That was a big win for all our staff because that was one of the complaints before, they couldn't see the purchase orders until we got an invoice. And that could be weeks, even months later, but now it's in the system right away."

Not only do staff members like Bonnita have to spend far less time tending to tedious, step-dense manual processes, but there have been additional time savings thanks to resulting responsibility shifts. Prior to AP automation, the AP staff was entirely responsible for hunting down important backup documents for each invoice. Now, the approving staff are required to take over this step, and it takes them less time to perform it since they're the ones who have the background context on why the invoice is being paid in the first place. This way, Bonnita has more time for value-added tasks.

Easier Transparency for Stakeholders

The approval team's ownership of invoice backup documentation doesn't just let Bonnita focus on more value-added activities, either. It also makes it simpler for DFW to demonstrate value to the farmers it serves. Tracy said, "As a non-profit, we work for dairy farmers in Wisconsin. If we're doing something with dairy farmer dollars, the dairy farmers will obviously want to know, 'What did you do with that money?'" Since the approving team has the context to quickly provide this information in great detail, DFW can easily show their farmers the value they're getting for their money.

Improved Control and Transparency

Since Bonnita no longer manually facilitates the invoice process, the risk

of duplicate data entry is eliminated. This also helps increase control and data accuracy. Managers' control has also improved, giving them a clearer oversight of the approval process, enhancing internal controls and accountability. And when an employee enters OnBase to approve an invoice, they don't just find the invoice and all relevant documentation surrounding it. They can also look at previous invoices, which provides further transparency. Plus, since they can easily access all this information, they don't need to go on a big, time-consuming search or ask Bonnita, Tracy, or Jessica Rogers-Heintz, DFW's Senior VP of Finance and Administration.

A More Centralized Process

DFW's disparate systems, including OnBase, Great Plains, and Outlook are now integrated, which has enabled convenient notifications and reminders throughout the process. But this change has also centralized the entire invoice process itself. Tracy said, "We like the integration between OnBase and our financial system. Now, they talk to each other, and everything is in one place, so you don't have to go into different folders and applications to find invoices and relevant files. It's all in Unity now, which is amazing."

Increased Efficiency and Reduced Paper Use

By automating invoice processing and purchase order integration, DFW has significantly reduced its reliance on paper. These wins have aligned well with DFW's long-term efficiency goals. Tracy commented on this gain, saying, "Looking at the bigger picture, it's part of our overall strategy as a company to be as efficient as possible, especially in finance, so that we're using fewer resources, including staff time, to do administrative tasks. That way, we can focus on other things like process improvements, and OnBase has been a big part of that for us."

Real-Time Access to Financial Data and Enhanced Visibility

Since DFW's financial system is now integrated with OnBase, staff have real-time access to financial data.

The centralized platform has improved visibility across the organization, allowing staff to access and manage invoices, purchase orders, and contracts efficiently throughout the invoice's lifecycle.

And this visibility isn't just limited to finance staff. All staff can interact with invoices and have visibility into the full AP process, which has supported better financial management and compliance across the organization.

A Smoother Vendor and Employee Experience

Another advantage to OnBase's enhanced visibility is its impact on the vendor experience. If any employee receives a vendor inquiry about an invoice, they can now access the necessary information to provide a quick answer.

> "
> Looking at the bigger picture, it's part of our overall strategy as a company to be as efficient as possible, especially in finance, so that we're using fewer resources, including staff time, to do administrative tasks. That way, we can focus on other things like process improvements, and OnBase has been a big part of that for us.

Tracy Engbloom, *Director of Financial Information*, **DFW**

OnBase has also improved the employee experience, especially for remote staff. Of DFW's 55 employees, about a third of them live across the U.S. and work remotely. This solution has helped make it possible for this arrangement to work effectively and seamlessly.

The Final Challenge: User Adoption

While DFW's accounting team loved OnBase as soon as it was implemented as a document storage and records management solution in the early 2000s, this wasn't always applicable to staff outside of AP. They were slow to adopt the technology, and many never used it.

However, when they extended OnBase to automate the AP process, this staff was required to start interacting with OnBase to review invoices, attach documents, add notes, cross-reference related records, and approve payments. Plenty of training was required to make this happen, but ultimately, these efforts warmed up staff members who hadn't previously embraced the technology. And since adoption rates are up, DFW can enjoy the benefits of OnBase even more widely.

A Future of Further Progress

Thanks to the success of the AP automation project, DFW is now exploring further enhancements to its financial processes. About the success of the AP automation implementation, Tracy said, "It's kind of opened a new world for us, now we're looking at the next process to implement. And I think a lot of credit goes to our team, but to Naviant too, because this had to be a successful project for us. It was the first one, so if it failed or wasn't well received, we wouldn't be able to look at other projects. So, the fact that we got through it and it's performed as well as it has was important."

Currently, DFW is considering moving to the cloud and expanding its solution to other finance process like budget transfers and the contract approval process. Down the road, they're also looking at tackling check requests and automating their accounts receivable invoice process.

"

The time was right for us to implement OnBase, and I was very happy to see this vision finally come into reality because it has been a real benefit for the organization. Not only does our team love it, but most of the users are happy with it, too. And we 're already talking about what we're going to do next using these tools.

Jessica Rogers-Heintz, *Senior VP of Finance and Administration*, **DFW**

WHO WE ARE

Naviant helps customers reimagine work and harness intelligence to deliver exceptional outcomes.