

Digitization without Disruption: Fire and Emergency New Zealand Demonstrates How It's Done



Fire and Emergency New Zealand is a critical public service organization, operating more than 650 fire stations and supported by 3,000 employees and 12,000 volunteers. Every minute of their time and every dollar of their budget directly impacts their ability to protect communities across the country. That's why they turned to Desktop Imaging and ABBYY to recoup valuable time and effort by automating a notoriously labor-intensive function: accounts payable.

Challenge

Behind the scenes at Fire and Emergency New Zealand, the Transactions Team faced several converging challenges:

- Manual invoice handling and legacy data capture processes were slowing them down.
- Accounts Payable's existing document capture solution was reaching the end of its contract.
- Increasing compliance requirements demanded the adoption of Peppol e-invoicing capabilities.
- Mounting pressure to meet, if not exceed, the government payment time reporting targets.
- Enforcement of business rules to reduce manual interventions to fix non-compliant invoices.

The Accounts Payable function needed to adopt a new, automated invoice processing solution that allowed them to modernize the way invoices were processed, help them achieve compliance requirements, and ensure that supplier terms and business requirements were consistently applied.

They clearly outlined their requirements for the new solution:

- They wanted to update and improve operations without expanding headcount or investing in new infrastructure by embracing a service that could scale efficiently, while freeing their people to focus on higher-value work.
- The solution needed to be highly configurable, yet still an "off-the-shelf" solution that wasn't a bespoke or unique application created exclusively for the purpose.
- Most of all, it needed to be completely "hands-off" for the Fire and Emergency team, to not add new tasks or activities to an already busy team.

In short, the organization needed to completely reimagine its accounts payable workflow without disruption to its essential emergency services.

CHALLENGE

SOLUTION

Solution

A fully managed, cloud-based invoice automation service

Fire and Emergency New Zealand partnered with Desktop Imaging to determine the ideal solution: DI Invoicing, a comprehensive, fully managed cloud service designed to eliminate manual data entry, reduce risk, and ensure compliance with government standards.

As a New Zealand-owned leader in document digitization since 1997, Desktop Imaging provided a service requiring no new software, no infrastructure investment, and no additional workload for Fire and Emergency New Zealand's internal team.

At the core of the service is ABBYY Vantage, the market-leading intelligent document processing platform driven by AI and machine learning. Powered by ABBYY's purpose-built AI technology, DI Invoicing automatically classifies, extracts, and validates invoice data across multiple channels—email, physical mail, and e-invoicing—while continuously learning to improve accuracy over time.



VALUE

Value

The results were immediate and transformative: faster, smarter, and fully compliant invoice processes.



Complete process automation: Fire and Emergency New Zealand now enjoys a completely hands-off invoice capture and validation process. From receipt to approval, standard invoices are processed automatically, regardless of their source or format.



Accuracy and timeliness: Parallel processing capabilities and real-time monitoring eliminate delays and reduce the risk of error. Priority processing ensures service level agreements are consistently met.



More strategic use of resources: Freed from manual data corrections, the AP team now focuses on resolving exceptions and improving supplier relationships to deliver far greater value to the organization.



Comprehensive validation framework: DI Invoicing performs multi-tier validation to ensure accuracy and compliance. These include:

- Enforcement of IRD's rules for Taxable Supply Information
- Vendor matching against approved supplier database
- Purchase order validation and matching
- Business Unit validation and matching
- Bank account verification for payment security
- Invoice date, currency, and GST exemption checks



Future readiness: With e-invoicing fully integrated, Fire and Emergency New Zealand meets the government mandates for faster payment cycles and increased digital adoption without needing to change core systems.

TAKEAWAYS

Takeaways for enterprise finance leaders

Fire and Emergency New Zealand's journey shows that true digital transformation doesn't have to mean disruption. By adopting a managed service approach, they achieved:

- ✓ **Automation without replacement**, modernizing workflows while keeping existing core systems.
- ✓ **Compliance as an advantage**, meeting and exceeding government technical and security standards.
- ✓ **Scalability without investment**, scaling volumes up or down without additional infrastructure.
- ✓ **Immediate efficiencies**, freeing skilled staff to focus on higher-value work.
- ✓ **Fraud prevention checks**, ensuring payments are only made to approved suppliers and that the invoice payment information details match the approved supplier record.



For Fire and Emergency New Zealand, implementing DI Invoicing wasn't just a process upgrade; it was a strategic shift toward sustainable efficiency. The solution now serves as a foundation for ongoing innovation, with flexibility to expand into areas such as line-item extraction, supplier onboarding, and expense claim automation.

Through this partnership, Fire and Emergency New Zealand has proven that even the most complex public service organizations can embrace automation confidently without disruption, keeping their focus where it belongs: on serving New Zealand communities.