

Farmward Cooperative Streamlines Accounts Payable with Square 9's AP GlobalAutomation for Agvance

Case Study:

Farmward Cooperative
With Anna Petersen, AP Administrator

Departments Impacted:

Accounting

Objectives:

Automate invoice digitization, approval, and accessibility across 11 locations and send data directly to Agvance, an agriculture line of business ERP.



FARMWARD
COOPERATIVE

Advancing farming for generations

About Farmward Cooperative

Farmward Cooperative, founded in 2017 through the merger of several legacy cooperatives, serves its agricultural community with a variety of essential services. Headquartered in Morgan, Minnesota, Farmward provides a variety of products and services across several divisions, such as grain handling and marketing services, agronomy products and services, bulk energy deliveries, and much more. Farmward is focused on being at the forefront of progression and innovation, understanding its customers' needs to build strong relationships with its member owners, and supporting the communities they serve.

Challenges

Farmward operates across eleven locations, which at times can create challenges, particularly for Farmward's Accounts Payable department. Averaging nearly 500 invoices a month across eleven locations created difficulties with tracking, efficiency, and accuracy.

Farmward faced similar challenges for other payable processes, such as its invoice approvals, which contained the added challenge of requiring multiple approvers.

"I think a lot of people viewed approvals as cumbersome, but they were necessary. Depending on the time of the year, approvers would get 30 to 50 invoices at a time, so they kind of viewed it as a little mountain to tackle," explained Petersen. In addition to these challenges, Farmward's payables process was incredibly time-consuming. "I mean, I got pretty good with tracking all the documents, but it was like a little job on the side, just to get through that process," explains Petersen.

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"We manage multiple locations' bills, and before Square 9, the process involved me gathering a lot of bills, sending them off to a location manager via email, and then hoping I get them all back. We needed a way to track them."

Anna Petersen, AP Administrator

“There was a lot of paper usage; we were sending these invoices off to people to approve, they were printing them off to add notes and sign off, and then they're sending them back to us, and we were printing them off. With 400- 500 invoices a month, can you imagine how much paper that was?” said Petersen. With the difficulty in tracking and managing this information and the added environmental and financial costs of printing, Farmward set out to find a solution.

Solution

After viewing various demos with potential vendors and neighboring co-ops for an Accounts Payable automation solution, Farmward narrowed its search before deciding on Square 9 Softworks. One of the neighboring cooperatives gave a demonstration to show Farmward how Square 9 worked and allowed Farmward to see if a Square 9 solution would fit its needs. The solution's customization capabilities allowed Farmward to not only maintain many of its current processes but also provide new efficiencies in Accounts Payable, with the potential to unlock efficiencies across other departments. This customization was confirmed after Farmward contacted Square 9 for further consultation.



“We had a demonstration with another solution that was very limited before we saw Square 9. We would have had to conform to work to their service, so seeing Square 9 and how the solution could be built based on how we wanted it to work was huge,”

Anna Petersen, AP Administrator

Another consideration that helped Farmward decide on Square 9 was the solution providers' established reputation for customer service. “A lot of companies we talked to had customer service that was overseas, so if we reached out towards the end of the day, we wouldn't hear back until the next day,” explained Anna Petersen.

But above all, the feature that impressed Farmward was Square 9's API connection with Agvance. “We needed an API connection with Agvance, and it's apparently not very common to connect to Agvance with other solutions that we talked to. Square 9 was the first company that was able to explain to us how they were able to establish that connection,” said Petersen.



“We had other companies that said they could make it happen, but Square 9 specifically knew how to integrate with Agvance and explained how it was possible.”

Anna Petersen, AP Administrator

Benefit

After working closely with the Square 9 Professional Services team to create a solution ideal for their processes, Farmward implemented Square 9 with minimal challenges or interruptions, even training certain approvers to test the solution before it was complete.



The most significant challenge during implementation was figuring out what to start with, but Square 9's Professional Services team guided Farmward through this process to help them find what works for them.

"Square 9's implementation team helped us work through what we really wanted," explained Anna Petersen. "Because we wanted to make sure we implemented it right. Do we build something really elaborate? How do we structure this based on what we need?' And obviously, the project kind of grows as you start, but we finally got to a point where we just had to start somewhere. It's pretty basic, and if we need to add things from there, Square 9 has the capabilities to do that," said Petersen.

With the implementation of Square 9, Farmward was able to address its accounts payable challenges directly, resulting in significant improvements to the efficiency and streamlining of information and process tracking.

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"Now, I do the majority of my work in Square 9. I am in there sending out invoices to the different approvers, posting them when they come back, and dealing with different vendors on any account issues. Then there's month end, making sure everything is ready, and working with our Controller to ensure certain things are posted."

Anna Petersen, AP Administrator

Farmward was incredibly impressed with Square 9's service. "We always had somebody responding to us in a timely fashion," explained Petersen. "We understand people have a workload but just hearing somebody say when they'll get back to you on something was very helpful," said Petersen.

Results

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"You get so used to things being inefficient that seeing what Square 9 had to offer, what we were looking for was really promising."



Anna Petersen, AP Administrator

Farmward Cooperative's staff was incredibly excited about their new solution. Using Square 9, two of Farmward Accounts Payable staff can extract information from documents, fueling processes in Agvance and providing secure, additional access to these records to other Farmward employees.

Petersen has been very impressed with the amount of paper saved, stating, "I looked into how much paper we were saving using Square 9's resource reporting, and it was actually kind of insane." In addition to this environmental impact, securely accessing documents from any computer has saved Farmward tremendous amounts of time.

"Before, if I wanted to look at a previous document, I would have to walk down to our basement, open a vault, and pull the prior invoices," explained Petersen.

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“Now I can just click and find what I need. People will call me and ask, ‘What did we spend on this?’ and I’m able to run a report and send it to them. It’s super easy to run a quick report and send it to people, so that’s another huge piece for me. I didn’t think it would be that big because I was just so used to going and pulling invoices.”

Anna Petersen, AP Administrator

And then there’s the time Farmward Cooperative has saved on filing paper. “I was so busy trying to process all the other invoices, there would be days I would spend the entire eight hours filing invoices and alphabetizing them, as well as everything else that goes with that, so that has saved so much time,” said Petersen.

When asked if Farmward Cooperative would recommend Square 9, Petersen mentioned, “We definitely tell people about Square 9 when it comes up, and we’re very happy with what we have here.”



About Square 9

Paper-based work is a soul-crushing, profit-sapping drag on individual, team, and company productivity. Paper literally smothers innovation, creating a competitive disadvantage.

Our AI-driven platform locates and extracts high-value data from any source documents, emails, invoices, contracts, and more, regardless of format. No manual entry. No delays. Just the right information, exactly when and where you need it.

By capturing invoice data with award-winning AI-assisted capture and sharing it with Ag-tech solutions like AgVantage and Agvance, your Agri-business can save time on data entry, reduce errors, and eliminate information silos.