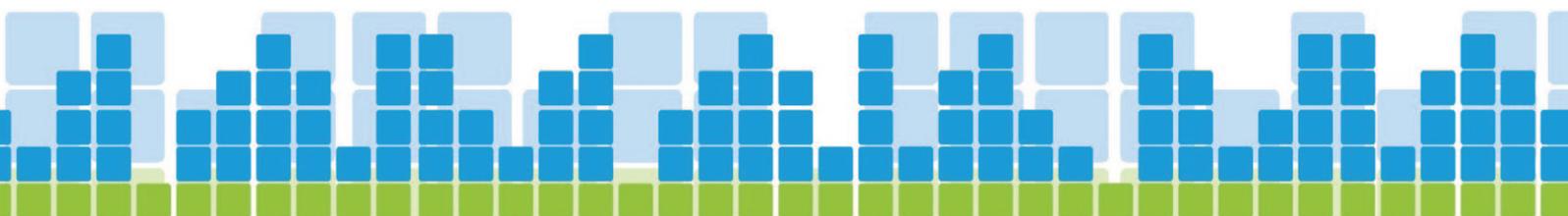


# APN awards



2015





# Welcome

**Welcome to the APN awards supplement** – a celebration of commitment, dedication and innovation in Accounts Payable. Since we first started looking for excellence in the industry for these awards, we have been overwhelmed with the number and quality of nominations from across the country.



When a team works well together, they produce outstanding results, and the best teams achieve those results in a supportive, communicative and highly regarded fashion. At APN we know that every individual within a finance team has a part to play in the overall success of the department and in delivering success to the business as a whole.

These awards make sure those achievements are recognised. Staying ahead of the game in a challenging and complex environment demands focus and determination. Success is an outstanding achievement which we think needs rewarding.

Narrowing the nominations down to the final twelve, was a very difficult task indeed, and I'd like to thank our judges for the time and consideration involved in coming to a final decision.

Nominations for the next awards will open from October 2015 and we look forward to hearing all the new and exciting ways organisations are meeting and beating challenges.

And so the winners of this year's awards are...

Ellen Leith  
Editor  
eleith@apn.today  
@APNewsChat

**APN® Ltd**  
Building 173  
Curie Avenue  
Harwell Science and Innovation Campus  
Didcot  
Oxon OX11 0QG  
United Kingdom  
Tel. 0844 870 0508

**www.apn.today**  
@APNewsChat  
#APNAwards

# Could you be your organisation's change maker?

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**If you haven't yet heard of, or worked with an AP Change Maker, that's something which is likely to change in the near future. Or, most likely – you already work with someone who's about to take on that role.**

For several years the AP industry has been facing widespread change, both in technological advances, and in process improvements. But that's not all. The change has also been one of perception and an acknowledgement of the power that lies within Accounts Payable to transform the way the finance function operates. Increasingly, the value of an AP department goes straight to the heart of an organisation's bottom line. Given the right kind of recognition, power and responsibility, AP professionals are becoming instrumental in maintaining and driving profitability.

The fundamentals driving this change have their roots in cost reduction and maintaining efficiency - which over the years since the recession have become increasingly important - in many cases - simply for organisations and those in their supply chain to stay afloat. One of the enablers behind this change has been the new technology powering the improved processes. But, as with most things, it usually takes someone to pick up the mantle and make those changes happen successfully. Increasingly, that role is being headed up by the AP Change Maker – someone who's good at spotting inefficiencies, someone who can spot opportunities for cost reduction and the benefits of connecting with the different P2P departments, as well as ensuring supplier enablement.

Today's AP environment can be complex – invoices coming in to the business in several different formats, some to a disjointed, de-centralised organisation, frequently with a convoluted approvals and compliance process. And with less than 11% of organisations saying they work in an entirely automated fashion, the continued reliance on manual processing, means a lack of visibility and control. All of which leads to error, inefficiency and even raises the possibility of fraud.

The rise in the use of the job title is a recognition within the industry of the relevance and importance of change and having the right someone to implement it; someone employed to take the company and the department forward, and importantly – to raise the department's visibility to C-level executives and gain critical buy-in from the senior management team.

With the right person, technology and processes in place – the change maker has the ability to produce a rapid turnaround in productivity and via efficiency improvements, go a long way to protecting working capital and improving supplier relationships by enabling on time payments, or capturing early settlement discounts. And with the possible inclusion of a dynamic discounting or supply chain finance solution, offering suppliers better access to cash, and improved risk management.

Today's AP is no longer a quiet back office transaction house, but is increasingly a key operational area of business and, as is already the case in some major UK corporates, transforming functionality to sit within one broad, deeply inter-connected purchase to pay department.

The winners and runners up of this year's awards are perfect examples of those at the forefront of change in the industry.



# AP Team of the Year

## The Winners

### ITV

During 2013, one of ITV's Transformation priorities was to "Get Fit" – a programme designed to continuously improve processes. While good progress was made, the team felt that more could be achieved, particularly around making jobs easier by removing any unnecessary complexity and improving inefficient processes.

In the following year the team introduced a range of simplification initiatives across the business. The initial ideas were recorded on white boards and Google docs before being put forward to key stakeholders. From these ideas, 14 initiatives were taken forward into a major project to deliver simpler, faster, quicker and more accurate processes across the business.

The new policies included purchase order and expense approval limit alignment, rationalised credit card limits, No Receipt No Pay, new credit card offering, simplified supplier request form, and simplified task codes. The team worked hard to ensure the buy-in of senior executives, with project sponsors including the Group Financial Director and a steering group consisting of senior members of the Finance and Divisional Management Teams.

This resulted in a wide range of benefits, such as:

- Payment to terms increased to 94%, allowing the company to sign up to the Prompt Payment Code
- Reduced workflow notifications by more than 25%
- Master supplier team transferred into P2P team to drive continuous process improvement, resulting in a zero error reporting
- Reduction in internal and external audit fees of £120,000 pa
- Potential duplicate payments highlighted and resolved prior to payment worth £900,000
- VAT savings on expense claims at £1.6m
- First time match increased to 90%
- Dynamic discounting to improve working capital
- Customer satisfaction at 97.8%.



*Representatives from ITV accepting their award - sponsored by Basware*

The team also introduced innovative ideas such as reducing a 12 page P2P communications manual to two 2 minute bite sized "I'm an Invoice, get me out of here" videos to simplify and communicate key processes to the business.

Not only that, but the team collaborate in many ways including a "come work with me" initiative which has not only helped collaboration across P2P, but has been key to showcasing the team to the wider business. Communication was channelled through a number of formats from team meetings, intranet site, iBusiness Toolkit, ITV magazine, posters and emails to group training and one-to-ones.

The team are also involved in a "train to change" programme of continuous improvement. One of the key benefits of which being an improved cash-flow reporting process.

The team also enjoy great teamwork activities such as the objective based, P2P Stars event every three weeks. Prizes for which include a half day's holiday, with the added spice of a potential "forfeit" such as a chocolate scorpion! Staff are actively encouraged to progress their careers by learning new skills and pursuing studies in the financial field ranging from NVQs to CIMA.

# AP Team of the Year

## The Finalists

### Bourne Leisure

Bourne Leisure has been through a period which included a change of leadership, a new electronic P2P system, team restructure and most importantly, a change in mindset.

The P2P system has reduced hours spent inputting, scanning and storing invoices. Suppliers have been streamlined by over 50% and average approval time is now 9.5 hours, rather than the week that it could have taken previously. A weekly AP report is sent out to key stakeholders to draw attention to key issues challenging the process – suppliers on stop, ageing of pending receipt, pending approval, disputed invoiced, lost early payment discount and action plans for suppliers refusing to engage. At the end of 2014 the departmental manager mapped all current processes to ensure the team had answers to any issues that could arise. The team were then involved in a process improvements challenge – resulting in a decrease in duplicate payments, payments in error and significant early payment discounts, resulting in a saving of £112,000 from January – April 2015.



*Bourne Leisure AP Team accepting their award - sponsored by Basware*

The period of change was managed successfully with full visibility and transparency. Teamwork is celebrated by organised social events on a regular basis. Every holiday or event is celebrated – Wimbledon was celebrated with a trolley serving strawberries and cream scones and Easter eggs appeared on everyone's desk ahead of the Easter weekend, for example.

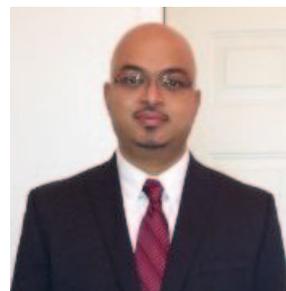
Bourne Leisure enjoy using their P2P system over the whole end to end P2P process and are dedicated to forward thinking to drive the business forward.

### Take-Two Interactive

Take-Two had been struggling with inaccuracies resulting from human error, a problem they resolved by automating the process. All non-PO invoices are now automatically routed for approval, based upon pre-defined business rules, leaving the AP department to handle exceptions.

Previously, executives were unable to approve invoices when travelling which contributed to a late payment problem. This situation has been countered by their ability to review and authorise payments from their smart phones. In addition, not only were early payment discounts missed previously, but because vendors were paid late, Take-Two was often saddled with late fees. As the process is now automated and under control, Take-Two have been able to negotiate discount terms with its top 25 vendors.

In the past, internal and external audits typically took a week or longer to complete, but now take a matter of hours.



*Moolchand "Rock" Persaud, Accounts Payable and Finance Director - Take-Two Interactive Software*

The AP department at Take-Two Interactive has transformed from a manual, labour intensive department to a highly automated, efficient and proactive organisation that has implanted strong controls, improved working capital management and positively impacted profitability.

# AP Manager of the Year

## The Winner

### Liz Love – Hilton Worldwide

Liz joined Hilton Worldwide in May of last year with a strong background and wealth of knowledge in P2P. The area of business is in the process of major change, and the organisation's goal was to ensure a "Centre of Excellence" in the UK. As of May 2015, Liz had increased the number of invoices processed per month x5, despite having to work in a largely manual environment.

Liz has revised processes to streamline the duplication of effort across the P2P process. For every process review, all documentation has been updated to reflect the new status and she has been instrumental in mapping out the new process before being implemented to ensure validity.

As a result of consolidating invoices to the team, the business has been able to reduce FTEs by 10 in the last five months, making savings of around £200,000. Cost savings and efficiencies have also been made by a reduction in query time, email traffic and audit issues.

Liz has upgraded the payments solution that supports BACS to one which is easier accessed, which also supports business resumption planning and has implemented an interim matching tool in the absence of enabling technology. Liz has also eliminated the need for manual remittances and cheques.

On top of this, various relationships across the business have noticeably moved forward since Liz's arrival, especially with Procurement and the Finance Directors. The communication channels have been opened and there is a greater understanding on all sides where the journey starts and ends. Finance now has access to the procurement ordering system which allows transparency between the two functions.

Team engagement has climbed to 86% from 75% in June 2014. Various reasons were given for the improvement, from bi-monthly "your time" catch ups, daily team huddles and "Team Member of the Month"

During the transitional period and restructuring Liz was described by many as "dynamic" in her efforts to ensure her colleagues were well informed along the way. While she had an important role to play in the re-structure, she also recognised the challenges being faced, and ensured time in her day for everyone.

Liz is described by all as someone who *"takes a genuine interest in her team members"* and someone who *"brings out the best in everyone"*



Liz Love accepting her award - sponsored by Fiscal Technologies

# AP Manager of the Year

## The Finalists

### Ingrid Klescova – Bourne Leisure

Ingrid stepped into the role of AP Manager in 2013 with no previous accounts payable experience. Ingrid has been described as fair and flexible, but a firm AP Manager. She steered the team through a new company wide P2P system implementation, and a period of upheaval without ever appearing anything but calm. Ingrid is highly regarded by her team and executive team.

The new electronic P2P system was the largest system implementation company-wide for over 10 years. Ingrid's first task was to restructure the team. She was successful in ensuring they were on board with the new way forward and now has a slick, motivated problem solving group.

Efficiencies from the new system have led to faster invoice payment and significant early payment discounts. Suppliers have also been streamlined, resulting in a reduction of more than 50%. The management information provides the procurement team with effective, detailed information to make crucial buying decisions.



*Ingrid Klescova accepting her award - sponsored by Fiscal Technologies*

Ingrid focuses on creating the right environment for her team by ensuring she is approachable and inclusive, an example of this has been the introduction of flexible working hours. Ingrid is described as not being afraid to “get stuck in” when needed. Her accountancy background means she is happy to delve into the detail, get to the route of the problem to support her team. A team player as well as an inspiring leader.

### Paul Osborne – Surrey County Council

Paul has been responsible for leading a programme of process improvements and cost efficiencies and has managed the introduction of new technologies to secure accurate and timely outcomes. Under his leadership Surrey County Council has achieved a top quartile position amongst Local Authorities, with 99% of invoices paid by BACS, 81% of remittances sent electronically and 94% of invoices paid within 30 days.

Paul has been committed to pursuing a paperless strategy which in 2014/15 resulted in 144,225 payment remittances being dispatched by email, an increase of 25,694 on the previous year, resulting in £22k savings on postage alone. Paul has also been central to the introduction of a purchasing card online approval process system, allowing greater transparency of low value purchasing and spend analysis.

For the fourth year running, the team have been awarded with the government standard Customer Service Excellence Award. And over the last five years, customer satisfaction scores have improved steadily, from 66% to 92%.



*Paul Osborne accepting his award - sponsored by Fiscal Technologies*

An independent consultancy reported that;  
*“The excellent process and work carried out by the current AP team under the lead of Mr Paul Osborne [has] a high level of enthusiasm, morale and teamwork.”*

# Young AP Ambassador of the Year

## The Winner

### Nicola Lally – Jet2

Following her degree in Business and Management, Nicola spent over five years at Asda, where she became the Accounts Payable Team Lead, before moving into her current position at Jet2 at the beginning of last year.

Nicola has been solely responsible for bringing back the invoice processing function from the company's Indian outsourcing partners. Jet2 credit their outsourcing team in India with doing "a fantastic job", so bringing it back in-house was a very big move for the company. Nicola developed the project plan and pitched this to their Chief Financial Officer to gain support for the transition. She subsequently managed a seamless handover between the two teams.

Following the successful transition, Nicola has driven her team to perform the function even better than it had been doing previously.

Nicola also worked alongside the Accounts Payable Manager on a project to switch credit card provider. A system change which meant replacing all of the company credit cards as well as developing an online reconciliation tool and rolling it out to the business. Nicola has been credited with being instrumental in making this a success.

Nicola has been responsible for developing and recruiting a very strong team under her. She's respected as a firm, but fair leader whose supportive mentality gets the best out of people. In fact, she's recently created a new Senior Assistant role following a team restructure, enabling the development of new processes and ensuring a highly trained team.

To help drive unity across the finance team, Nicola arranges ad hoc huddles and special occasion get togethers and outings, including the Finance Christmas party on behalf of the CFO. Nicola implemented various new collaborative ideas within her team and played a vital role in communicating how change could affect them and others.



*Nicola Lally accepting her award - sponsored by Taulia*

*Nicola's described as an extremely hard worker who ensures excellent service to both internal and external customers. Partly as a result of her strong people management skills, the team has been successful in helping to drive process efficiencies and cost savings across the business.*

# Young AP Ambassador of the Year

## The Finalists

### Maria France – ITV

Maria is described by colleagues as a forward thinker who is constantly looking for new ways to improve the day to day activities within P2P.

When Maria began her role in the payment team, the foreign payments process was operating on an “as and when” basis, with no real timetable for payments, making forecasting and planning difficult. She implemented a weekly planner to enable control, resulting in a reduction in queries and enabled the timings to be advertised across the wider business. In the process, Maria also implemented new approvals limits and revised the process, saving time and money.

Maria played a key role in delivering the project to ensure the paper based exceptional and sensitive payments, sent and approved via email moved onto a portal. This raised visibility and therefore a more effective audit trail. Maria has been keen to develop relationships across P2P and both recognised and sought to educate others around a knowledge gap between teams on how invoices were paid.

### Lewis Sydney Eames - North East Lincolnshire Council

Since starting at the Authority as a Finance Apprentice, Lewis has advanced rapidly by a combination of hard work and making the most of opportunities. Lewis was recognised as a “leading light” and became the Authority’s Employee of the Year, beating 1,000 other employees, an accolade he in fact won twice (the only Authority employee ever to have done so).

Lewis has helped roll out an e-purchase order processing across departments, and since the process doesn’t allow users to submit invalid or incomplete information, there have been significant cost savings. Lewis has also contributed to anti-fraud measures by identifying potential risks around change of bank detail requests – a process change which flagged up a fraudulent invoice for a large sum.



*Maria France accepting her award - sponsored by Taulia*

She also encourages her staff to spend time learning other processes within the organisation. Maria has organised various, very successful charity events while serving on the Business Service Centre social committee.



*Lewis Sydney Eames accepting his award - sponsored by Taulia*

Lewis recommended the use of Gov Connect and has been instrumental in showing members of the team how to use it effectively. He is also working on a project board to implement a new AP service desk function for call logging and incident flagging system for financial, AP and AR specific queries. At only 18 years old, Lewis achieved his AAT level 2, and is now studying for his AAT, level 3.

# Outstanding Contribution to AP of the Year

## The Winner

### Caroline Adams and team - Debenhams

Debenhams is investing in an ambitious large scale programme to deliver change in their Roadmap to 2020. Over the next 5 years the company plans to invest significantly in people, process and systems, replacing outdated methods with world class technology.

Improved back office systems will give Debenhams better access to, and visibility of data. To date Debenhams have improved processes by rolling out a new P2P process to more than 500 Head Office users, increasing roll-out of the B2B portal with suppliers by 20% and leveraged a 40% increase in EDI invoicing. The manager of the team oversaw a complete rewrite of all processes and procedures, including authorisations and control templates.

Various new policies resulted in significant savings and improved cash flow, including re-negotiated terms with suppliers who were outside policy. The team re-introduced supplier reconciliations on top 50 accounts which delivered significant savings from GRNI. In fact, processing improvements to uncover duplicate invoices have led the Recovery Auditors to comment that there is “no future requirement” for their recovery service (and therefore the associated cost) for Debenhams.

The team has also been re-organised to ensure collaboration across the P2P departments, with specialised roles and subject matter experts being created. On top of that, a project is underway, working with procurement on all large contracts in GNFR.

The team have implemented a wide variety of KPIs to support best practice, promoting benchmarking results, used to identify weaknesses, analyse root causes and offer solutions to be implemented.



*Caroline Adams accepting her award - sponsored by Kofax*

Caroline has been successful in creating an environment where the team are empowered and success celebrated. Team members are given fun AP Awards for positive ideas and contribution. Career progression is actively encouraged and the competencies frame work identifies any training needs via a personal development programme.

# Outstanding Contribution to AP of the Year

## The Finalists

### Rachel Zdyrko and team - Harley Davidson

The accounts payable team which are based in three countries have been effective in working together to drive process efficiencies across the 14 international office locations they serve. Together they reduced an already excellent rate of 5% of PO based invoices which were not “straight through” to 2.5% in three months.

With the EMEA AP Shared Services team supporting many legal entities across the region, intercompany recharging is a common, but often difficult process. The team worked to design and implement a new intercompany recharging process with has resulted in more effective processing and increased ownership and visibility within the business.

Cost savings have been made by increasing the capacity of the department via a process of standardisation, best practices and continuous improvement. Within the team, great ideas and approaches to reporting and effective analytics are shared.



*Rachel Zdyrko accepting her award - sponsored by Kofax*

Clear ownership of analytics helps the day to day reporting, but a team approach facilitates the development of future capabilities. Teamwork success is celebrated using the company’s “three S” approach – specific, selective and sincere.

### Lorna Williams and team - Sabre

Lorna has been instrumental in implementing a new workflow tool which has reduced the need to manually input invoices twice and the AP team has now teamed with a data capture organisation to carry out the OCR of documents, invoices, credit notes and Issue Vouchers.

The new implementation has improved the Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX) compliance around documentation and company policy around approval limits.

Significant cost savings have been made for the business by reducing the time to process invoices, the reduction of paper and a reduction in FTEs.

Lorna works with all the admin teams across EMEA and APAC and has a team of 9 AP staff in India that report to her, so working to ensure collaboration is key to what the team does. Change management has been “tough” but the perseverance of Lorna and her team has been strong, to ensure the new policies are adhered to and the reasons for the change are understood.



*Lorna Williams accepting her award - sponsored by Kofax*

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- Reconcile your KPIs to your business outcomes



Keynote Speaker, [Joe Simpson](#)

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