

Automation tipped to make billing painless for MSPs

With flexible working continuing to remain popular in a post-pandemic and increasingly uncertain economy, MSPs need more scalable options for streamlining their billing processes as they face staffing challenges.

During a Sapphire Systems and IT Europa Leader's in Discussion roundtable in London, MSP delegates said the pandemic has exposed the shortfalls or failures of the billing process, highlighting that there is a deficit of people engaged in the delivery of managing various contract types, terms and billing options.

Manual billing can be a time-consuming process, especially for an MSP with diverse customer and service offerings. Given the complicated nature of billing, an error can easily be made, even by those who are experienced in managing the billing process, attendees explained.

"The people in a business are part of the challenge. Every individual that does manual invoicing is bound to make some sort of mistake. The more bills that need to be processed, the greater the chance of an error occurring," one of the delegates said.

AUTOMATED BILLING SOFTWARE

For any MSP paying close attention to their accounts and finances, failing to modernise their billing software can have a detrimental impact on their growth, attendees said.

The group agreed that one area MSPs continue to overlook — although many view it as an effective way to keep their financial house in order — is to adopt best practices around automation, which delegates said can help any growing MSP streamline manual billing tasks.

"No matter how big or small your MSP, you need to leverage automation such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA) to overcome any billing challenges. I think it requires a mature business to decide to move to RPA because you have to let go of the previous business process that defined your business

model in the past."

Another delegate agreed by stating that those who utilise the value of automation can ensure far greater accuracy during the billing process and help eliminate human error.

"It is essential for MSPs to put best practices and automation in place," the delegate said. "By taking advantage of automation, MSPs can maximise

profitability, achieve higher internal operational efficiencies, and scale their business growth."

It can also remove hours of tedious labour, reduce payroll costs and eliminate any other bill-processing headaches, delegates noted.



Sapphires Systems' CSO Chris Gabriel

MSP 'ADAPTATION' FOSTERS GROWTH

In the second half of the roundtable, the topic of growth and how MSPs can drive service excellence through a unified business systems model was a key discussion point among attendees.

According to Sapphire Systems' CSO Chris Gabriel, it is vital for any MSP to "adapt their systems to accommodate growth" despite economic fears.

The group of delegates agreed by saying that "agility" is needed to stay afloat in a changing marketplace that currently offers limitless product integrations.

"How are you going to achieve flexibility, viability, and scalability if you don't make use of the countless integration available to you?" one of the delegates said during the discussion.

“It is important for MSPs, regardless of size, to adapt and adopt different ways of thinking while implementing new methodologies. They have to expose themselves to change in order to achieve growth and scalability.”

Adapting to changing times, while having the ability to adjust to dozens of product integrations available in the marketplace, can help MSPs accelerate their processes so they can work more efficiently — not harder—and support more of their customers, attendees noted.

“It is important for businesses to be aware of changes in the marketplace and make necessary alterations quickly to thrive,” one of the guests explained.

HYBRID APPROACH

Sapphire’s CTO, Phil Taphouse, said there are clear benefits when MSPs adopt a unified service delivery model as they adapt to change, but there is a possibility that we will see more MSPs transitioning through a hybrid approach instead.

The unified model suggests using a core system such as SAP to handle financials, sales, project-management, procurement, invoicing, and a whole host of other functions across the entire business rather than having to integrate and maintain disparate platforms. “A blended or unified world means having platforms that work together seamlessly,” Taphouse said. “A hybrid approach helps MSPs take advantage of both worlds. “The challenges MSPs are facing are obstacles I am seeing across most enterprises and markets that we [Sapphire] go into.

“There is light at the end of the tunnel and from what I am hearing from today’s discussion, we are all on the right path to refining our financial business models and using unified solutions in an effective way that fosters growth.”

The roundtable, which was held under Chatham House Rules and hosted by IT Europa Editorial Director Will Garside, featured several industry leaders, experts and members from the MSP community.

