



# "Fast Onscreen Access to Scanned Supplier Documents Helps me to be a More Effective Financial Director"

## Overview

### ■ Challenge

To provide onscreen viewing of supplier invoices for 18 hotels direct from System21 and web browser. 8,000 invoices per month

### ■ Solution

AutoFORM Supplier Invoice Module  
AutoFORM Archive  
AutoFORM Scanner Workstation  
System21 process.connect

### ■ Why AutoFORM

AutoFORM Archive is an approved Geac Technical Partner

AutoFORM shares a common design structure with System21, which means that information can be transferred easily between the two systems. This enables rapid deployment, and automated document indexing, in addition to integrated document viewing from within the System21 environment.

### ■ Key Business Benefits

By being able to view documents onscreen, managers & directors can complete their tasks in less time.

By eliminating filing tasks, administrators can spend more time on checking invoices, and researching new opportunities for price cutting.

Lower purchase invoice processing costs.

Less time spent on resolving supplier payment queries

### ■ Is it for you?

The advent of lower-cost storage systems means that every business can benefit from this document imaging technology. Without complex readjustments to your IT infrastructure your supplier invoice documents can be online and fully accessible from System21 in a matter of days



*"Fast, onscreen access to supplier invoice images - direct from System21, enables the finance team to spend more time on analysing supplier invoices, rather than collecting and filing them. Which means that we can more readily identify business growth and cost cutting opportunities."*

These are the comments of David Lewis, Finance Director of Forestdale Hotels, who have recently enhanced their System21 Finance systems with AutoFORM Archive & Document Imaging.

Forestdale are one of the UK's largest privately owned hotel groups. With the successful £25.5 million acquisition of the Zoffany chain, Forestdale now own 18 hotels in the UK and have recently expanded into France. Each hotel tends to order its own food and drink and other essential services. While this ensures continuity of supply, Forestdale's central accounts payable department is challenged with collecting and processing around 2,000 invoices per week.

To process invoices promptly, Forestdale use Geac System21. While this investment had delivered a number of operational improvements, one difficulty remained.

David Lewis explains: "The lack of an online invoice viewing facility was seriously affecting our ability to accurately forecast expenditure and optimise cash flows. Each time I needed to check what a charge on the nominal ledger was for: who authorised it, which hotels it covered or whether it was a part invoice, I would have to run down to the accounts office and look up the records. While I could have arranged for duplicate copies to be kept in my office, in a business where office space is pared down to the minimum in favour of hotel bedrooms, I simply didn't have the space. Besides, having to file two sets of 8,000 invoices a month would have stretched our busy accounts office beyond endurance.

## Supplier Invoice Imaging, Archiving and Workflow

### The Solution was AutoFORM

Ideally, Forestdale wanted to view invoice copies direct from System21, so they turned to Geac for advice.

Geac's Technical Manager Phil Knott comments: "We recommended AutoFORM on the basis that it had proved to be very successful for a number of other System21 users in similar situations."

"What is so advantageous about AutoFORM is that it shares a common design structure with System21, which means that information can be transferred easily between the two systems. Rather than just integrating with System21, AutoFORM truly *interacts* with it. Not only does this enable AutoFORM to be rapidly deployed, it also results in faster document import and retrieval. For instance, as documents are scanned they are indexed with data electronically collected from System21, eliminating the tedium and errors associated with high levels of manual indexing or OCR. It also automatically creates the links between AutoFORM Archive and System21, so that staff can refer to documents on screen as they complete their System21 tasks."

### Business Benefits

Lewis added: "I can't begin to tell you how much time and effort AutoFORM saves us. Any system that allows finance directors and account offices to spend more time managing financial matters rather than chasing paper, is certainly worth considering on that basis alone. But AutoFORM offers much more:"

- **Reduces the Time Spent on Payment Queries,** as all the supporting information is available on screen instantly. Furthermore, invoices can be electronically flagged for follow up allowing Forestdale to easily identify & escalate outstanding actions. Electronic notes can be linked to each invoice to maintain an auditable record of the query and agreed resolution.
- **Electronic Storage Eliminates Filing Backlogs** and the lever arch files that darkened every wall of the accounts office. *"This has created a more pleasant, less stressful working environment"*, commented Pauline McGee Accounts Office Manager, Forestdale Hotels.
- **Online Searches Highlight Best Suppliers**  
Using the AutoFORM web browser, Forestdale can recall a cross section of invoices so that they can compare prices and service levels from a range of suppliers. This information can then be used to negotiate group discounts, and to generally advise hotel managers what the lowest market rate is for each product they purchase. McGee added, *"This type of research always yields valuable information. However, looking up the bills from all our hotels, copying and then filing them all over again, took hours - if not days of work. With AutoFORM we can conduct highly detailed searches in just a few minutes."*

### Adding Further Automation for Even More Benefit

"The benefits have been so dramatic that we want to extend the solution to sales invoices and purchase requisitions as soon as possible. However, this is not the extent of our future plans" says Lewis.



**"Before we installed AutoFORM we had to constantly climb up to reach lever arch files. This was not only a health & safety issue, it wasted valuable time too"**

**Pauline McGee**

"When we purchased AutoFORM we also took Geac's advice to invest in System21's workflow module - process.connect. As yet we have not fully exploited this technology. Our strategy has been to make business changes along the Pareto 80:20 principle. Lack of online document viewing was our main problem and we have concentrated on introducing AutoFORM before seeking further automation. However, process.connect does offer us some exciting opportunities to realise even greater efficiencies and productivities." In particular process.connect will enable Forestdale to:

- **Identify Authorisation Bottlenecks Online:**  
"We spend a lot of time and effort chasing hotel managers to send us their authorised invoices in a timely manner, so that we can accurately predict our expenditure and optimise cash flows" says Lewis.

In the future, all invoices will come to Bournemouth for scanning and logging into the nominal ledger. This will trigger process.connect to email each of the hotel managers with a "to do list" of all the invoices that they need to authorise, or action. All the manager has to do is click on the attachment or hyperlink to view each invoice across the intranet. Approvals (or rejections) will be made by typing in a password (which is more controllable than monitoring handwritten signatures) and the job will be done. This will save a lot of time all round. Invoices not checked within business limits will automatically be reported back to the accounts office, immediately identifying any approval 'bottlenecks' for corrective action.

- **Automated Online P.O to Invoice Matching:**  
One of the most time consuming, but nevertheless vital tasks that Forestdale administrators need to complete is matching and checking supplier invoices against purchase orders. To accelerate the operation, Geac can arrange for process.connect to automatically tie the matching p.o. to the purchase invoice and present both on screen for cross examination. "This will be fantastic!" says Pauline McGee.

**In asking for his overall impressions David Lewis said "AutoFORM in conjunction with process.connect supplements and extends the functionality of System21. Do we recommend it? Definitely! In fact we already have!"**

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