charted.

Energy SaaS company saves time and increases efficiency with vendor onboarding

upl!ght®

Uplight

Uplight is a SaaS company enabling both utility companies and individuals to utilize individual energy devices to harness energy and handle energy demand, resulting in better grid management, while saving consumers money. They also sell Uplight thermostats directly to consumers, in addition to their software.

With six subsidiaries and additional lines of business through acquisitions, Uplight is a growing company making a difference in energy consumption.

The challenge

After being on NetSuite for over a decade, the small AP team at Uplight was ready for something more efficient to handle their AP operations. The team of two had been using SAP Concur for eight years, an expensive and clunky invoice approval platform that didn't have any vendor onboarding capabilities. Making changes to people or accounts would have to be replicated manually, causing constant duplication of efforts, and only synced with NetSuite overnight, creating further barriers when reconciling at month-end.

Without any vendor onboarding solution, the team would have to follow a time-consuming process: a new invoice would come through, the vendor would have to be tracked down and verified, then wait for the vendor to respond with banking information. This could delay the first payment by up to three to four weeks.

After eight years with Concur, the team at Uplight was looking for a NetSuite-native solution that could handle invoices, approvals, and onboarding vendors.

How Charted helped

Uplight onboarded Charted for [Approval Automation](), [Advanced Vendor Onboarding](), and [Invoice AI]().

Vendor onboarding has made the most noticeable difference to their AP operations, as it has completely transformed what was once a fully manual operation. Now, the onboarding process happens automatically as soon as a new vendor is approved, and vendors can be fully set-up within NetSuite in a few days. It also ensures vendors are signing off on the Uplight terms and conditions for vendors, which is embedded in the original vendor onboarding email, which also includes onboarding instructions. Vendors learn the Uplight process for how to submit invoices, ensuring vendors know what to do from the beginning, and creating further efficiency for the Uplight team.

Adopting Approval Automation has also been a huge improvement for the Uplight team, for a few different reasons. When implementing, the Charted team configured two levels of approvals—a lower-level approval for software vendors, and a higher-level approval for all other vendors. This customization allows for more visibility into software purchases, ensuring the vendors are being used, and the amount of licenses being purchased are actually needed. This lower threshold keeps eyes on these purchases, and ensures approvers are aware of their purchases. In addition, since Charted Approval Automation does not require NetSuite licenses for every individual approver, the Uplight team has been able to create significantly more complex approvals, with multiple approval levels, and a hierarchy approval flow that was unavailable to them in Concur. When they had a limited number of approvers previously due to seat limits, it prevented them from adhering to their own approval standards. Now, the team is always ready for an audit, thanks to the adherence to their matrixes embedded within NetSuite.

"At month end, SAP Concur created barriers because not everything was live. Whereas having everything sit in NetSuite, I can see what's pending in my queue, what needs accrued, or what needs processed, live.

Brooke Hearley
Senior Manager of Transactional Accounting

"The vendor onboarding process was one of the key things I was really excited about because it's streamlined our process completely. It's currently set up so when something finalizes with our legal department, they log into NetSuite and they kick up the vendor approval request to the vendor, so accounts payable knows there's something in the queue to be set up. It's really streamlined and shortens the amount of time between being able to approve a vendor and approve their first invoice."

Brooke Hearley, Senior Manager of Transactional Accounting, Uplight

Results

Uplight has seen numerous benefits after adopting Charted AP Automation. With Charted Approval Automation, they have more functionality without needing to purchase additional licenses. They now have a two-tier approval matrix with multiple levels of approvals based on different vendors, and all approvers can access everything through their email: invoices attached, how the invoice is coded, and all the notes, directly from NetSuite. Chasing down people to get them to log in and approve individual invoices is no longer necessary—they can approve directly from their email inbox, and speed to final approval has increased.

The approvals process has been designed to satisfy the audit requirements, keeping the audit trail right in NetSuite and ensures everything is being signed off on appropriately. For example, invoices for over a million dollars go directly to the CEO of Uplight, and that approval is logged in NetSuite.

Using Advanced Vendor Onboarding, Uplight has been able to significantly streamline the process of onboarding vendors, shortening the time between when a vendor is first approved to approving the first invoice. Where it might have taken three to four weeks in the past, if a vendor signs up through the portal within a week, they could process their first invoice immediately afterwards. It also ensures vendors are always signed off on terms and conditions, and invoices from vendors are produced in the correct format and follow Uplight's process from the very beginning, improving efficiency.

With these solutions in place, and realizing the benefits of having their invoice solution, approvals, and vendor onboarding all embedded directly in NetSuite,

"I can confidently say that if an invoice is over one million dollars, I can go see the stamp of approval from my CEO and that satisfies any audit requirement, showing the invoice was properly approved by the right level of management. That has made it really easy when we've been going through our year-end audits to prove that we are following our approval matrix, because the system forces you to."

Brooke Hearley
Senior Manager of
Transactional Accounting

the Uplight team has seen efficiency gains come to light. Month-end accruals used to take two hours, and now takes 20 minutes. For a small team of two, the automation of previous manual work has been a significant time saver.

"Approvals is like our other backstop, because it stops licenses being approved if we don't need them. Do we need 10 Docusign licenses, or do we need two? If someone just approved it and passed it through, it might not make it to the right level of management to make that decision. Our special matrix with two levels of approvals has definitely helped us control our software spend."

Brooke Hearley, Senior Manager of Transactional Accounting, Uplight

To learn more about Charted AP Automation, including Advanced Vendor Onboarding, Approval Automation, and Invoice AI, click here.

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