

DIGITAL TRAVEL EXPENSE MANAGEMENT AT MERCER INTERNATIONAL:
FROM DIGITIZER TO SOFTWARE CO-DESIGNER

MERCER



Challenge:

- » digitization of travel expense reporting and processing

Solution:

- » participation in the „Customer Influence Program“ to help shape the digital solution AFI Xpense

Benefits:

- » simple, quick, and paperless recording of (travel) expenses via app and desktop
- » transparency of processing status
- » digital and smooth processing and posting of travel expenses across departments
- » intuitive operation due to seamless integration with SAP



Digital travel expense management at Mercer International: from digitizer to software co-designer

„Never in my life have I recorded and settled a trip so promptly,” says Christoph Grewe-Franze, who is thrilled with the digital recording of travel expenses at Mercer.

The CIO himself is an experienced digitizer who has set his sights on creating „an efficient, multinational IT and process organization.“

It is hardly surprising that one of the world’s leading producers of northern bleached softwood and hardwood kraft pulp is already well positioned digitally: Mercer has automated its entire purchase-to-pay process in SAP optimally. As a result, the company benefits „from consistent efficiency and exponentially growing data quality,” says Rainer Ackermann, project manager at Mercer Rosenthal. Behind this efficiency are AFI solutions which are directly integrated into SAP.

Enroute to digital travel expense reporting

„A digital process is always the better choice for you to get faster results,” Mr Grewe-Franze firmly believes. For this reason, the paper-intensive process of travel expense management should also ride the digital highway.

After all, business travel is common practice at Mercer - even if it was reduced to a minimum during the pandemic. Previously, employees had to record travel expenses in an Excel spreadsheet or other tools depending on their location: these were then sent to HR for review with the corresponding paper receipts, and finally to Finance and Accounting for posting. The processing time as well as the transparency regarding the processing status were less than ideal and it was time for a change.

Due to its own digital spirit and the positive experience with AFI’s SAP add-ons, the company participated in the „AFI Customer Influence Program“. Marc Altrichter, Team Lead Purchase Enhanced at AFI Solutions, explains the underlying principle: „Basically, customer feedback flows into further development of all AFI solutions. With the ‚Customer Influence Program‘, we went one step further and involved Mercer in the prototyping process. This was the best way for us to test whether the idea on which the solution is based also works in practice.“

The effort has paid off: today, Mercer also records and processes (travel) expenses digitally throughout Germany. All locations work in one system using the same processes.

Digital travel expense recording from the employee's perspective

Employees at Mercer now record their (travel) expenses digitally with the AFI Xpense web interface or flexibly and from any location with the AFI Xpense app. Incoming receipts can be easily photographed with both company mobile phones and personal devices. The app is available in the Apple App Store or Android Play Store. Any travel policies, such as daily allowance rates, are already preinstalled by registration with the company address. The solution consolidates multiple receipts for a trip into one coherent PDF document.

Finally, employees transfer their travel expenses to HR with a click. In addition, they can see the processing status of their travel expenses and all trips taken to date in the app or on their desktop at any time - including a detailed travel expense report.

Digital travel expense recording from the perspective of HR and F&A

As soon as employees submit their travel expenses via the app, the system starts the corresponding process in SAP. The HR department has direct access to all expense reports received in the AFI Xpense Monitor and can check them in a completely digital format. At the same time, the transaction including receipts is archived and available at any time.

Once the check is complete, the expense report is transferred from the monitor to Finance and Accounting at the touch of a button. It will then appear directly in the AFI Invoice Monitor for posting. The entire transaction has been accelerated many times over and has also become more transparent and user-friendly.

Leveraging synergies: linking digital travel expenses with digital requirement coverage requests

As the saying goes: after the project is before the project. At Mercer, trips are requested in advance, which is why AFI Xpense is now being linked to AFI Purchase, the solution for digital requests. „The travel request is, after all, nothing more than a requirement coverage request, followed by an invoice at the end of the purchase-to-pay process,“ says Mr Altrichter, explaining the logic behind the integration of travel requests into AFI Purchase.

We are now running all processes of the same type in one workflow system.

But Mercer still has a lot to do: AFI Xpense is also to be used at all locations in Canada after the S/4HANA rollout.



Mercer is one of the world's largest producers of market pulp and a growing leader in the solid wood products space. The company produces NBSK (softwood) and NBHK (hardwood) pulp in modern mills. Mercer also operates one of the world's largest softwood lumber facilities. In addition, the production sites generate bioenergy and produce biochemicals based on the renewable raw material holf.

Mercer generates electrical and thermal energy from biomass byproducts created from the pulping and sawmilling processes. This enables optimal use of forest resources and reduces waste.

<https://mercerint.com>

AFI Solutions GmbH is a leading solution provider for the digitization and optimization of document processes around SAP. The solutions cover the entire purchase-to-pay and order-to-cash process.

AFI is the only software manufacturer on the market that offers everything from a single source: With the RedPaperCenter as a managed service, companies can easily outsource the digitization of a wide variety of paper documents. In process optimization, AFI scores with SAP-integrated software solutions. The cloud-based DocumentHub as software as a service (= SaaS) completes the unique product portfolio.

AFI Solutions GmbH
Sigmaringer Straße 109
70567 Stuttgart

info@afi-solutions.com
www.afi-solutions.com

SAP, the SAP logo and the SAP partner logos are trademarks or registered trademarks of SAP SE or an SAP subsidiary in Germany and other countries.



**POWERFUL
SOLUTIONS
FOR SAP**