

CASE STUDY

GREAT DANE

LOCATION

Chicago, Illinois

INDUSTRY

Transportation Manufacturing

INTELLICHIEF SOLUTION

Intelligent Accounts Payable Automation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Great Dane was founded in 1900 in Savannah, Georgia, and is now headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, with additional corporate offices in Savannah and nearly 5,000 employees across the country. The manufacturing, service, and distribution leader operates 11 manufacturing plants throughout the country and is the leading manufacturer of high-performance commercial transportation equipment, including dry and refrigerated trailers and truck bodies, as well as steel, aluminum, and combo open deck trailers.

Great Dane features a robust network of 16 full-service Service Centers, along with four sales-only Service Centers to distribute the company's premium transportation solutions; while Great Dane is proud to partner with 26 dedicated dealers who sell the company's trailers and truck bodies coast to coast.

Great Dane champions the needs of its customers by ensuring the safe and efficient delivery of goods and champions the needs of its employees by creating a dynamic environment for growth. The company not only engineers durable and high-quality trailers and truck bodies, but also fosters relationships that last a lifetime.

GREAT DANE INVOICE PROCESSING BY THE NUMBERS

Invoices Received Per Year	235,000 (pre-COVID) - 300,000+ post-Covid <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 175,859 PO Invoices (74.8% of total invoices)• 59,395 Non-PO Invoices (25.2% of total invoices)
Location for AP Processing	Corporate Headquarters in Chicago 11 Factory Plants 20 Branches
Great Dane AP Team	13-15 AP Staff in HQ (Chicago) 11 Controllers at the Factory Plants 22 AP Analysts at the Plants and Branches
Other Non-PO Invoices	Utilities, Freight, and Miscellaneous Check Requests

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

KEEPING UP WITH INCREASING INVOICE VOLUME

With an AP team spread across the globe, Great Dane faced several challenges in managing its AP process. Their document retention management software was an older, antiquated technology and put out less than desirable results, forcing them to rely on paper documents. It was no surprise Great Dane started their search for an Intelligent AP Automation Solution to reduce reliance on manual matching and invoice processing. Their biggest challenges remained:

- No visibility into their Accounts Payable process
- With COVID-19, Great Dane needed to accommodate a hybrid work environment
- The ability to automate some of their harder manual operations such as 3- and 4-way match of 300,000 invoices
- Reduce reliability on paper invoices and manual data entry

Processing such a high volume of paper invoices was slow, cumbersome, and error-prone due to pricing and quantity discrepancies.



CHALLENGES WITH PAPER-BASED INVOICE PROCESSING AT GREAT DANE'S GLOBAL ACCOUNTS PAYABLE TEAM

Great Dane had previously implemented a document retention system to capture images of supplier invoices, but 3-way matching still relied on multiple people. AP Analysts and Buyers at the plant level verified detailed line items on POs and GL coding. The corporate AP team matched PO invoices and processed non-PO invoices like utilities, manual check requests, or other items. Connecting to their JD Edwards EnterpriseOne ERP system still required manual data entry.

A hardship to overcome was that physical, paper Invoices from the factories took **20.7 days to process**. Most of Great Dane's invoices arrived electronically, while some still came in via regular mail.

- **One AP analyst printed out invoices to review and check raw material pricing against the price catalog to make sure the invoice matched. Any issues or discrepancies meant hand-delivering or emailing an invoice to a buyer for further research and resolution.**
- **Once the buyer resolved the issue, the invoice went back to the AP analyst for one additional verification and GL coding before mailing it (or scanning and emailing) to the corporate AP team in Chicago for voucher creation. GL codes embedded in the PO for raw material purchases flowed into the general ledger and into inventory.**



"We have a price catalog that we get the pricing from our suppliers, which changes quarterly or monthly basis. The frequency of changes is significant and needs to be updated against our part list. As a result, a lot of purchase orders, when they go out, have the incorrect pricing,"

- JEFF TOMAN, CORPORATE CONTROLLER AT GREAT DANE

Controllers tried using antiquated OCR software to scan invoices and then process them through JDE E1. However, over time they realized their scans were not sophisticated enough to read the information in the system-generated files, prompting Great Dane to look at a new solution to capture, automate, and verify their invoices.

For the 20 Great Dane service centers, most purchases were intercompany transfers from the company's parts distribution center. The service centers received manual signoffs on invoices that were then sent to Chicago for processing. When Great Dane sold its parts distribution business, purchases became third-party transactions with parts invoices. As a result, the AP staff at the branches now had to process the new third-party invoices.

Management at headquarters and the service center level felt the pain of a failing AP process. Supervisors had little to no visibility of where invoices were in the payment process and had little view of an AP Analyst's workload.

INTELLICHIEF SOLUTION

Accounts Payable at Great Dane has become more productive and efficient after transforming their process with the help and continued guidance of IntelliChief. With IntelliChief's robust platform:

- Great Dane can now 3-way match verification and automatic processing of PO-based invoices against the receipt, line-item detail on invoice and matching against catalog within their JDE EnterpriseOne system.
- Third-party transactions no longer require paper and manual verification – the new automated process decreased verification time, speeding up invoice processing.
- Manual data entry has been significantly reduced as IntelliChief's intelligent data capture is able to process line-item details on invoices that are single and/or multiple pages.
- Great Dane now has full visibility into their AP process including the total number of invoices that come into IntelliChief. From ingestion to voucher, every invoice is visible to processors and management.
- Clear line of sight and visibility into the AP Process enabled Great Dane to identify invoice backlogs and resolve them in a timely manner.

““With IntelliChief, we can see where invoices are sitting and who the suppliers are. With a clear line of sight (from the time it enters IntelliChief to the time it is vouchered), we can understand and prioritize. It takes the guessing and the subjectivity out of the process.”

– Jeff Toman, Corporate Controller at Great Dane
on the impact IntelliChief's AP Solution

SELECTING AN INTELLIGENT AP AUTOMATION SOLUTION

A seven-person team from AP, Accounting, and IT was formed to identify and select an AP Automation solution that would provide the highest return on investment for Great Dane.

- **The team's focus was finding a solution that could automatically validate, match, GL code, and voucher invoices to significantly reduce manual entry for invoices that couldn't be automatically processed.**
- **Great Dane also wanted a solution tightly integrated with and backed by JDE EnterpriseOne.**
- **Also important: Adoption and ease of use to streamline exception handling and approvals.**

While researching vendors, the team learned one of its sister companies, Trail King Industries, used IntelliChief for their intelligent AP Automation solution. This allowed Great Dane to get a better understanding of the intelligent solution in a live scenario in their own industry.

“Payables are probably a little more complicated than most, but based on Trail King's experience, it just seemed like it had everything we were looking for, and it fit within our budget,” said Toman.

Ultimately, Great Dane chose **IntelliChief's Intelligent AP Automation** solution based on the ability to perform 3-way matching, part number cross-references (to the JDE catalog), GL coding, and handle a high volume of invoices.

IMPLEMENTING AP AUTOMATION AT GREAT DANE

Implementation was a new and complex experience for Great Dane's team. They were a bit skeptical at first, as their paper-based processes were multifaceted and relied on specific line-item details that required an expert eye. However, IntelliChief was able to meet Great Dane's needs and exceeded their expectations.

“Implementation was new for most of us from the get-go. But the discovery process came first, with a lot of questions going back and forth. Once that was defined, IntelliChief built the workflow and we saw an initial design. The workflow in the initial design laid out how the document should flow, identified issues with the different types of invoices (whether it was manufacturing POs vs. invoices that needed to go to price catalog validation). We all agreed that we had the right flow and that's where the actual development of our new system began,” said Toman.

Two manufacturing plants were the first to go live (Brazil and Terre Haute, Indiana), along with half the service centers, by the end of 2021. Over time, the remaining factories and service centers came onto the IntelliChief solution, and the process became centralized.

RESULTS

Since Great Dane adopted IntelliChief for its Accounts Payable process, the majority of their invoices automatically go directly into the IntelliChief solution. Any invoices arriving by mail are scanned at the plants and pushed into IntelliChief. Accounts Payable at Great Dane is a more productive and efficient process:

- Great Dane has seen a significant decline in manual data entry since invoices are sent through IntelliChief's intelligent data capture.
- 3-way match verification and automatic processing of PO-based invoices against the receipt, line-item detail on invoice and matching against catalog within their JDE EnterpriseOne system.
- Third-party transactions no longer require paper and manual verification – the new automated process decreased verification time, speeding up invoice processing.
- Clear line of sight and visibility into the AP process enabled Great Dane to identify invoice backlogs and resolve them.



“During the testing phase, we saw first-hand the actual process, an exception here, we need to do something differently there, but IntelliChief’s flexibility actually pleasantly surprised me and resulted in **a good experience**,” – Jeff Toman, Corporate Controller at Great Dane

“With IntelliChief, we can see where invoices are sitting and who the suppliers are. With a clear line of visibility (from the time it enters IntelliChief to the time it is vouchered), we can understand and prioritize. It takes the guessing and the subjectivity out of the process. It allows you to get past the ‘he said, she said,’ and focus on ‘OK, we have a problem and how do we fix it,” Toman said.

Visibility was a game-changer for the plant manager in Huntsville, Tennessee, who would ask to see any supplier invoice in buyers’ IntelliChief mailboxes to determine if there were any issues or find out how long they’d been sitting there.

“At the end of the day, the plant manager is the one who’s responsible. If we get cut off by a supplier because invoices haven’t been paid or there are issues not being addressed on a timely basis, the plant manager needed a clear line of sight to be able to hold people accountable,” Toman said. **“People just appreciate the transparency and the visibility that IntelliChief brings to the process.”**

Great Dane plans to continue working with IntelliChief as their needs change over time. They appreciate working with a technology partner with a customer-driven focus.

“Continuous improvement is what we strive for as a business and seeing that our technology partner believes in the same philosophy, this gives me a lot of confidence that this isn’t a short-term solution. We have a long-term solution and as our needs change, we can work with IntelliChief to make sure that IntelliChief accommodates those changes.”



Automate manual processes, reduce risk, and enhance customer relations with our industry-leading IntelliChief Intelligent Accounts Payable Automation solutions.

Talk to one of our IntelliChief experts to learn how we can address your business challenges.



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