THE CHALLENGE
With increasing volumes of invoices entering the organization, Siemens was on a mission to improve accounts payable (AP). And, not surprisingly, the company turned to technology to do so.

By investing in SAP and data capture solutions, Siemens was initially successful. However, they experienced limited efficiency gains. Moreover, it led to a fragmented technology landscape including multiple SAP instances for different divisions and various optical character recognition (OCR) products.

“We had almost 10 different OCR solutions in place for invoice processing in our different divisions,” said Nikolas Barth, head of strategy, Financial Shared Services, at Siemens. “It was very fragmented and not standardized. We were looking for one harmonized process for incoming invoices for all vendors.”

That is when Siemens turned to Brainware by Hyland.

THE SOLUTION
In 2013, Siemens implemented Brainware to improve invoice processing. It was no small feat with millions of invoices coming into its shared services center in Germany. The OCR solutions they had previously invested in were able to extract certain fields with some accuracy, but there were still too many human touchpoints.

With advanced intelligence built directly into the underlying engines, Brainware was far ahead of the previous investments.

“It was the missing link we needed as the technology was really able to read documents the way a human being would,” said Karin Springer, process manager for Incoming Invoices.

Not only did they want to consolidate multiple OCR solutions, Siemens wanted one solution to integrate with its many instances of SAP. Within nine weeks of project kick-off, Brainware for Invoices became operational within the company’s SAP systems, providing hands-free invoice classification, header, and line-item field data extraction as well as line pairing against information in SAP and seamless routing for approval.
Growing numbers lead to increasing wins
Since its adoption, Brainware has grown with Siemens, and its power has proven to be priceless for the company. Now receiving 3.5 million invoices from vendors worldwide, Brainware’s ability to quickly learn and accurately capture new invoices, as well as those in more than 20 different languages, has been crucial to maintaining and increasing process efficiency.

And, by leveraging its built-in intelligence, the company has been able to add and design processing rules that enable the software to extract over 50 data fields from each invoice.

“We have 51 data fields and more than 90 percent of them are extracted without manual intervention,” said Ninja Kobor, solution owner for OCR and verification software globally at Siemens. “I think that really speaks to the power of Brainware.”

It’s also boosted process automation across shared services. Barth noted an average automation increase of 30 percent — however, in some instances they’ve reached up to 80 percent.

That increase in automation is due largely to an integration between Brainware and SAP. Because each division of Siemens owns individual instances of the ERP system, they have successfully integrated Brainware with more than 50 instances of SAP. This not only ensures the automation of data extraction but also the validation of data and delivery of it to necessary systems.

“Integration is really a key element in terms of and in comparison to the provider solution we initially had in place,” said Carlos Vieira Caldeira, services manager for Brainware at Siemens. “We have a key advantage if you see it from an end-to-end perspective.”

Streamlines processes in shared services
As a result of implementing Brainware, the invoice processing team has gained efficiencies as well as insight into its processes. Leveraging the Visibility tool provided with Brainware, the team now sees dashboards and creates reports to understand how the process flows and where specific invoices are in it.

“The brain is in Brainware because everything you need to know about a particular process is integrated with the system,” Barth said.

Not only is AP now able to process everything centrally and efficiently, the team responsible for managing the solutions powering financial processing was able to act as shared resources as well. Because they manage less technology, all technical education and management for Brainware sits with a single team of experts. This allows them to even better respond to the needs of the business.

Expands globally across a variety of documents and processes
With their initial success, Siemens has already started to deploy similar solutions using Brainware across their global offices, adding new documents and processes along the way. And with integrations already in place for its SAP instances, it is easier than it would have been previously to deploy solutions for new processes involving those systems.

In AP, the team has started to expand its invoice processing solution to remote offices and processes in eastern Europe and has plans to expand to southwestern Europe as well as operations in the U.S.

“The initial plan was not to roll it out globally but to replace the fragmented solution in the German market and for the rest of the market to go with external providers that outsource OCR and verification,” Barth explained. “Then, we decided because of the great results in Germany to roll it out globally. And it is many times driven by our internal customers who request it after good experience with headquarters’ use.”

Although OCR can often be associated with simple data extraction, for Siemens, Brainware has become an intelligent platform. It learns and captures data from complex documents, validates it and integrates with other systems all while providing insight into processes they simply never had before.

And Hyland became a perfect partner to help provide guidance and support along the way. “From our sales and customer management contact to our technical contact — everyone at Hyland has been professional in providing us with additional insight,” said Barth.

Learn more at Hyland.com/Brainware