

Why Mobile eProcurement Matters for a Modern Workforce

Driving Savings and Collaboration with Multi-Screen Purchase-to-Pay (P2P) Applications

Q2 2016 | Featuring insights on...

- » Mobile Applications for P2P Processes
- » Responsive Web Design (RWD) Applications
- » Strategic Benefits of RWD for Procurement Processes

Underwritten in part by



Contents

Introduction	3
Benefits of RWD for Business Users.....	4
RWD for eProcurement.....	6
Conclusion.....	8
About the Sponsor.....	9
About PayStream Advisors.....	10

Introduction

Cloud technology has become a critical part of back-office processes for today's competitive organizations. With many Purchase-to-Pay (P2P) departments under pressure to be more productive and cost-efficient, employees are working from their mobile devices at increasing rates. These employees need to be able to manage more tasks with greater efficiency and collaborate on spending decisions at any time and from any location. Many P2P solutions can be accessed from mobile devices, including software for accounts payable, supplier management, and procurement. As more employees now expect to work across multiple devices, the differences in how business applications integrate with mobile technology can have a major effect on the procurement process and cost savings.

Today's mobile financial process solutions are provided in two ways: through a native app or a responsive web design (RWD) application. These delivery methods differ mostly in the way they are accessed by a user—native applications are installed in and accessed from the user's mobile phone or tablet, while RWD, or multi-screen, solutions are hosted in the cloud and feature browser-based interfaces that scale across all screen sizes and devices.

There are several pros and cons for each kind of mobile access method, making them more or less suitable for some types of P2P automation than others. Procurement software, for example, is more dependent upon access to large amounts of real-time purchasing data, such as catalog item details, vendor contracts, or purchase order statuses. For purchasers, CPOs, and CFOs alike, real-time access to this information, as well as the ability to work across different devices throughout their workday, is essential for making collaborative and strategic spend management decisions. In order to meet this need, eProcurement solutions are generally best delivered through a RWD application.

This report explores the specific value of responsive web design technology for business software tools. It also highlights the benefits of RWD applications for on-the-go eProcurement processing.

Benefits of RWD for Business Users

One of the main differences between native applications and those built with responsive design is popularity. According to Mark Lowenstein, the Managing Director of Mobile Ecosystems, the tech industry has been largely focused on building strong mobile solutions for software products in recent years, with what he calls a “mobile first” mentality.¹ Many times, this focus comes at the expense of a software tool’s desktop version functionality. However, according to Lowenstein, while mobile devices are widely used for both personal and professional activity, the market for other devices, including tablets and PCs, remains steady. For this reason, responsive design is now receiving more attention from both providers and consumers alike. One of the main focuses of RWD developers today is on improving the user experience in these multi-screen apps.

The P2P automation space has also shifted emphasis toward the user; employees who are already working across devices in their daily lives desire the same flexibility in their business applications. The responsive web design, multi-screen experience is especially useful for today’s business environment; many corporations have multiple entities and offices in different geographic locations, making it normal for employees to regularly travel between offices, customers, and conferences. There must be consistent collaboration between corporate managers and travelling employees, and mobile devices are the most efficient tool for this goal.

RWD business applications have many other benefits specifically suited to improve flexibility and security for an organization’s mobile workforce. Some of these attributes include:

- » **Real-Time Access** – Whether the user is navigating on a phone, tablet, or laptop, a responsive app maintains its connection with the parent solution. This provides consistent, real-time access to vital business data, allowing the CFO and other key stakeholders to make consequential business decisions right away.
- » **Full Visibility** – While native applications involve a siloed approach to information sharing, especially when the user is offline, responsive applications give employees both a full application

¹ LOWENSTEIN, Mark. “Is the Term ‘Mobile First’ Becoming Outmoded?” Tech Opinions. March 18, 2016. Accessed April 11, 2016.

feature set and consistent visibility into the most recent business data. For example, in many industries, organizational purchases require many views and approvals before they can be processed. With a responsive application, the finance team can view the status and availability of budgets, and managers can view all documents, price quotes, specifications, and agreements associated with a request. This improves processing times, boosts productivity, and reduces processing costs. It also increases control for CFOs, allowing them to review terms, negotiate better pricing, and adjust the timing of purchases according to how they impact cash flow.

- » **Secure, Cloud-Hosted Company Data** – Responsive applications are built and run in the cloud, allowing companies to take advantage of the security benefits of storing their data in secure cloud-based systems. It is much safer for employees to review and store sensitive items like accounting information or contracts in a secure cloud application than in their email system or a native app on their phone.
- » **Minimal Training** – A native application often requires specific training for each different operating system on which it runs, which can be costly in both time and resources for an organization. RWD applications are consistent across any device, requiring only one round of employee training upon implementation.
- » **Low Maintenance** – Native applications require consistent updates and maintenance in order to maintain their efficiency, potentially causing management and support issues. With a responsive design application, the solution provider maintains the system for its clients, and all updates and system changes remain online.

Many business functions can be performed just as well with either a native application or a responsive app. However, some are more suited to the strengths of real-time collaboration, flexibility, and security that RWD applications offer. When it comes to procurement automation in particular, the versatile nature of RWD applications helps travelling employees make more informed and controlled procurement decisions. The following section further explores the benefits of RWD for eProcurement software.

RWD for eProcurement

In the procurement process, purchase requisitioning, capital acquisition requests, and vendor contract management all require timely communication across departments and corporate entities in order to maintain efficiency. Employees and managers on the go need an easy-to-use, accessible, multi-screen procurement solution that simplifies data entry, approval, and collaboration.

Leading mobile eProcurement solutions should facilitate:

A simple requisition creation and submission process. RWD solutions give mobile users real-time access to preferred vendors, the use of cXML punch-out catalogs to shop on preferred vendors' sites, the option to use stored vendor catalogs, and access to requisition templates. They also allow managers to quickly approve requisitions, streamlining the movement between requisition approval, purchase order creation, and order shipment. In addition, modern procurement applications allow buyers to create templates for frequent purchases that employees can then reuse, which saves time for mobile users. In all, the procurement process can shorten from days to mere minutes using a responsive application.

Mobile access to information and improved operational efficiency.

A responsive mobile procurement solution provides a consistent user experience regardless of device, allowing employees to maintain their corporate mindset in any environment. For example, employees can enter requests on a laptop at the office, while approvers can review price quotes and edit requisitions on a tablet from their kitchen table. Without having silos of data, employees can quickly complete a purchase from a variety of locations while still working within a collaborative corporate system. This also helps decentralized purchasing processes remain controlled and efficient, providing more flexibility for companies that may have more diverse business structures or staff with fluid roles and authority (e.g., a company in which purchasing does not strictly flow through procurement, but can be initiated by all levels).

Increased communication, collaboration, and savings. RWD solutions bring improved collaboration on contracts, vendor selection, and price quotes between different departments. The marketing team can create

a contract with an advertising agency, the legal team can review the contract and request more details, and the CFO can give final approval. This improved collaboration promotes more strategic and cost-efficient decision making, often resulting in corporate savings.

Employee satisfaction. Employees in today's mobile workforce want simplicity and speed. If employees find an application to be too complicated, they will resist using it. Therefore, in order for a company to see the greatest improvement and ROI from their software purchase, employees also need to buy into the solution. One of the most important things for mobile employees today is the user experience of their business application. Fortunately, the user experience is one of the main advantages of responsive applications, and this is especially true for responsive eProcurement solutions. Mobile employees also find it appealing that they do not need to download an app with a different interface than a desktop application. With a unified Purchase-to-Pay platform, they can submit an expense report or a purchase requisition from the same application with the same look and logic. In addition, software vendors with responsive design applications often carefully consider the placement of action buttons, the order of fields, and even the colors they use in order to provide a consistent and seamless experience for users.

Conclusion

When an organization moves to adopt an eProcurement solution, it must evaluate a variety of factors in its decision. Many of these considerations will seem more pressing during the selection process than the solution's mobile offerings, such as the solution's cost or integration capability. However, for organizations with a mobile workforce of any size, the breadth of a solution provider's mobile capability can play a significant role in the efficiency and satisfaction of travelling employees. PayStream Advisors urges any organization seeking a procurement solution to consider the benefits of a modern, cloud-based eProcurement tool. A solution that can be accessed securely through any device has the potential to drive more informed, cost-efficient purchasing decisions, and ultimately improve overall operational efficiency.

About the Sponsor

Ariett is a provider of cloud-based purchasing and expense technology. Its eProcurement solution automates the management of contracts, requisitions, invoices, and expense reports within a modern, unified procurement platform. The solution is offered through a multi-screen mobile application that allows users to quickly and easily connect to suppliers' websites, view and capture documents, manage vendors and contracts, and submit and approve expense requests—all from any device. The solution provides upfront control, improved internal collaboration, and a simplified business process, and results in better, more proactive decision-making.

Ariett's eProcurement solution is a Microsoft Cloud Application, providing users with the security, integrity, and data backup offered by the Azure platform. In order to provide optimal security for a client's mobile workforce, Ariett gives customers the option of using Azure Active Directory for employees to access the solution. From the Azure AD portal, IT can set up users for multiple, corporate cloud applications and can review security reports for abnormal activity.

Ariett's eProcurement solution can handle a variety of procurement tasks. Employees who are traveling or out of the office can easily use their phone or tablet to submit, review, or approve a requisition. Ariett offers a number of tools to help employees quickly complete purchases, including a punch-out API that connects Ariett customers to vendors' websites, and access to hosted catalogs stored in the Ariett system. Ariett allows employees to route vendor contracts and internal capital projects for approval, as well as to collaborate with different contract stakeholders for review and approval. Ariett also tracks contract and project purchases against budgets.

Ariett's cloud platform also provides the ability to process inter-entity, inter-company, and multi-currency transactions. Ariett's search screens can be used on any device to find current approvers, transaction statuses, and top spending based on vendor. To further drill down into details, Ariett provides over 200 standard SSRS reports (with the option to add customized reports), such as contract budget reports, invoice and expense accrual reports, and un-reconciled credit card transaction reports.

For more information, please call (718) 826-1120 or visit Ariett's website at www.ariett.com

About PayStream Advisors

PayStream Advisors is a technology research and consulting firm that improves the way companies plan, evaluate, and select emerging technologies to achieve their business objectives. PayStream Advisors assists clients in sorting through the growing complexities of IT applications related to business process automation with the goal of making objective, analytical, and actionable recommendations. Wherever business process automation technology is an issue, PayStream Advisors is there to help. For more information, call (704) 523-7357 or visit us on the web at www.paystreamadvisors.com