

How Expert AP Transformed Columbus City School District's AP Process

CASE STUDY



FIFTH THIRD BANK

About Columbus City Schools

As Ohio's largest school district, Columbus City Schools serves the needs of nearly 50,000 students in 109 schools. Their vision is to provide "a world-class model of public education that prepares members of our communities to reach their full potential." That vision for maximizing full potential extends across all departments, including accounts payable.

The Challenge: Automating Payments to Suppliers

Columbus City Schools was making 100% of their accounts payable (AP) payments using paper checks. As a result, the Treasurer's Office sought more modern payment alternatives for its suppliers that aligned with its automation and efficiency goals. The solution also needed to minimize the time spent managing the risk of fraud and reduce delayed payments. Ultimately, the district required greater automation with reduced payment processing costs and more comfort around audit concerns.

"Within the first year, we reduced our total paper check processing velocity by 90%. Our new system allows suppliers to pick the payment that they want."

—Stan Bahorek, CFO - Columbus City Schools

The Solution: Fifth Third's Expert AP

Fifth Third partnered with Columbus City Schools to carefully analyze its existing internal AP processes and business drivers. Based on this analysis and a thorough review of Columbus City Schools supplier payments, Fifth Third presented several solutions to deliver against specific ROI goals. Fifth Third's Expert AP solution provided the best technology fit to maximize electronic payments across the district's large supplier base.

Columbus City Schools would be able to generate a payment file—very similar to their former check run. Fifth Third would then process those payments according to the suppliers' preferred payment type, virtual card, enhanced ACH or paper check. Initiating payments this way would not only mitigate fraud risk but significantly reduce payment-related exceptions.

Fifth Third engaged the Expert AP implementation team and a dedicated project manager to begin a customized installation of the solution. Columbus City Schools had a technological requirement of tailoring the Expert AP solution to its robust ERP system, MUNIS®. The new payment platform began to optimize the payment mix from the start, simplify the AP process, and deliver increasingly positive engagement with suppliers. Seemingly overnight, Expert AP took on Columbus City Schools supplier enablement campaigns and began to provide cost savings.

The Results: Increased Efficiency, Risk Reduction and Supplier Optimization

In just its first year, the Expert AP solution has helped to convert **90% of eligible paper checks to electronic payments**. As a result, the district has already **achieved an amazing 106% of the district's goal for targeted spend volume**.

The benefits gained from implementing Expert AP generated **savings of 35% compared to the previous manual processes for Columbus City Schools**.

CFO Stan Bahorek praised the program, noting *“The increased operational efficiency frees up time for the Treasurer’s Office to focus on optimizing its supplier base instead of the manual process of paper check payments.”*

The automated processes supported by Expert AP allowed Columbus City Schools to seamlessly transition to work from home during the pandemic, eliminating on-site physical check processing. Based on the success of the program’s first year, an estimated **18% growth in program spend** is projected for year two.

Operational efficiency, improved Days Payable Outstanding (DPO), and supplier choice of preferred payment method are just a few advantages Columbus City Schools has gained with Expert AP. These benefits afford the AP department more time to deliver a world-class public education model to the Columbus community.

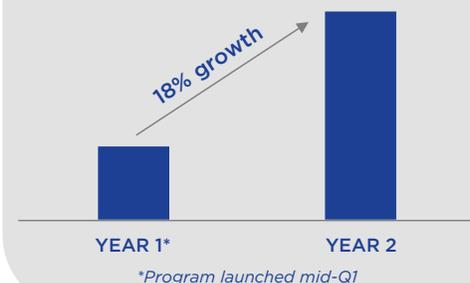
Expert AP Automation



With Fifth Third’s Expert AP, companies are able to:

- Improve cash flow
- Streamline end-to-end payment processes
- Reduce costs
- Increase defenses against fraud
- Strengthen supplier relationships
- Cover 100% of domestic payables
- Optimize payment mix
- Capture electronic invoices

Projected Columbus City Schools Program Spend



Contact your Relationship Manager or Treasury Management Officer today to learn more about [Fifth Third's Expert AP](#).



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