

## Creative Management

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- Brian Bengé

McDonald's is a company who can boast some impressive numbers. They have served more than 245 billion hamburgers, to more than 64 billion people, in their 33,000 restaurants, in 119 countries. More than 75% of McDonald's restaurants are independently owned by over 2,400 franchisees. For one such McDonald's franchisee to save over 1,800 accounts payable processing hours in a year is no small order – and it exemplifies the power of Bill.com.

Franchise organizations have unique challenges – controlling cash flow, maintaining vendor relationships, and planning for future growth. Just ask Brian Bengé, Controller of Creative Management, a multi-unit McDonald's Franchise based in Iowa City, Iowa. Tasked with reducing operating expenses,

Bengé set out to find a solution to automate bill payment and document storage, while integrating with QuickBooks. “Bill.com is the game-changer that has taken our financials to the next level.”

Owner Kevin O'Brien and his family have run McDonald's restaurants since 1958, amassing years of franchise management experience and bringing their stores into the 21st century. Each of their nine restaurants is ultra-modern, equipped with flat screen TVs and wired with Wi-Fi technology. With an eye on the cutting-edge, it's no wonder Bengé chose cloud-based Bill.com to help him take control of the company's finances.

“Before Bill.com started powering our back office in

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April 2010, over 90% of our costs came from labor associated with processing accounts payable,” reports Bengé. “In addition to postage stamps and check costs, this included reviewing bills, entering data, stuffing envelopes and reconciling bank statements. We were also paying to store paperwork in a specialized warehouse,” he adds. “Since taking advantage of Bill.com’s end-to-end payable process, Creative Management has successfully paid over 5,000 invoices in a little over one year and has reduced the cost of bill pay by roughly 750%,” claims Bengé.

These dramatic results are attributed to using Bill.com’s Command & Control Center™. By simplifying the management of their franchise unit activities, Bill.com allows them to focus on what matters most: managing cash flow. “Bill.com provides a clear picture of our daily cash flow,” Bengé explains. “Our Bill.com calendar shows cash flow coming and going, and we see real time reporting of invoices.” With the click of a button, Bengé can approve and pay bills from anywhere. He can schedule financial transactions, set up automated reminders to avoid late fees, and receive reminders if a vendor payment does not clear.

Because vendor relationship management is so critical for franchises, Bill.com makes it

easy for Bengé to stay on top of bills. “The great thing about Bill.com is since all of the invoices are in the cloud for me, I can type in a vendor’s name and have any invoice right there at my fingertips,” Bengé said. “Vendors know when bills are on their way and feel safe with Bill.com’s bank-level security. And by paying them electronically, we have been able to grow our profits with vendor discounts we get from a timely bill payment process,” adds Bengé.

Bill.com also facilitates collaboration with the McDonald’s store managers. “They want insight into the bills and costs their stores are incurring, but they don’t need to get into our accounting software. By giving them access to Bill.com – with the appropriate permissions and controls – they can stay in the loop.” Bengé explains how he uses Bill.com to enforce payment controls: “If I have an invoice to route for approval, I send it to that particular store manager. They get an e-mail asking them to view the bill – and electronically approve it – on Bill.com. It’s so convenient!”

Thanks to its document management capabilities, Bill.com has made it possible for Creative Management to implement a disaster recovery plan and reduce the time and



cost of their annual audit. Having their financials in Bill.com’s cloud-based environment means all of their critical documents are always in easy-reach, always accessible. In fact, they no longer store invoices in the warehouse where they’ve housed paperwork dating back to late 1950s – they now pull what they need from Bill.com. “In the past, our accountant would come to me needing 10 invoices. I’d have to go pull them from the warehouse – taking time out of my day. Now we no longer use the warehouse and our accountant can log in to Bill.com from his office or wherever he’s working and pull up all of the invoices he needs. It’s so efficient, he has now implemented Bill.com with some of his other clients as well.”

With what they’ve saved in money and time with Bill.com, Creative Management has been able to open a new McDonald’s restaurant without adding any additional back office support. “By automating our day-to-day accounting processes, Bill.com has made it easy for us to focus on the more strategic financial aspects of our organization that propel us toward growth,” said Bengé. “It’s taking our franchise organization to the next level.”