Only 4% of Finance Teams Have Fully Automated Accounts Payable Despite Widespread Software Adoption

New Ottimate research finds partial automation is the norm, leaving finance teams exposed to fraud, errors, and rising costs.

Ottimate Logo

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, February 25, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Accounts payable (AP) teams are under increasing pressure to accelerate payments, strengthen controls, and reduce risk to keep pace with business demands. To understand how finance leaders are responding, a new study conducted by Ottimate, an AI-powered accounts payable automation platform, surveyed finance leaders across retail, hospitality, and healthcare. The findings reveal that despite widespread adoption of automation tools, only 4% of organizations have fully automated their AP processes from invoice to payment.

The vast majority rely on a mix of automation and manual processes, an approach that creates operational gaps, increases manual effort, and exposes organizations to inefficiencies, errors, and fraud.

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> When AP isn't fully automated, bottlenecks form, errors increase, and teams are left reacting, instead of working strategically."
> *Dan Kim, CFO of Ottimate*

AP workloads are stretching teams thin
Beyond automation maturity, the report shows that AP teams are being pushed to do more with less. Half of finance teams process 5,000 or more invoices per month, and one quarter processes more than 10,000. That volume is running through workflows where 38% say it takes five or more days to process a single invoice from receipt to approval.

At that scale, every manual step becomes a bottleneck. Slow cycle times delay payments, increase the risk of errors and fraud slipping through, and leave AP teams with little capacity for the strategic work finance leaders expect.

"Finance teams are handling more volume than ever with tools that weren't built for this scale," said Dan Kim, Chief Financial Officer at Ottimate. "When AP isn't fully automated, bottlenecks

form, errors increase, and teams are left reacting, instead of working strategically."

Partial automation is the norm
To keep pace with growing demand, 93% of organizations have incorporated some level of automation into their AP processes. Most, however, still rely on manual steps for data entry, approvals, and exceptions handling, which drives daily frustrations, including manual data entry (48%), inconsistent adherence to the AP process (39%), and manual review of invoices (38%). Because processes are only partially automated, 48% of respondents say their automation tools deliver minimal or no cost savings.

"Partial automation has become the norm, but it's also the root of the problem," said Mike Waldron, Chief Marketing Officer at Ottimate. "Only end-to-end automation can close the gaps that lead to insufficiency, errors, overpayments, and fraud."

Fraud and errors are outpacing manual controls
According to the study, 41% of organizations experienced invoice fraud or overpayment in the past year. The figure may be higher, as fraud and errors aren't often identified until the damage is done.

Many teams have controls in place to reduce risk, including manual reviews (52%) and multi-level approvals (50%). Yet, these safeguards depend on human judgement, disconnected systems, and delayed visibility, which limits their effectiveness as invoice volume grows and fraud tactics become more sophisticated.

Limited visibility slows decision-making
Partial automation also impacts reporting and close cycles. More than half (51%) of teams spend six days or more closing the AP books each month. In addition, 52% spend 11 or more hours running reports each week, and one in four frequently rerun reports due to errors or incomplete data.

Without real-time, reliable AP data, finance leaders lack the visibility needed to make informed decisions about cash flow, vendor relationships, and profitability.

To download the report, [visit the Ottimate website](#).

Methodology
An online survey of 225 U.S. mid‑market finance and accounting decision makers in the hospitality, retail, and healthcare industries was commissioned by Ottimate and conducted by NewtonX from September 5 to September 12, 2025. Participants were recruited via the NewtonX Graph from an open network of 1.1 billion professionals across 140 industries and screened to ensure they are directly responsible for accounts payable processes at organizations with annual revenues between $20 million and $499 million. The margin of error for all statistics using the entire sample is approximately ±7% at a 95% confidence level.

About Ottimate
Ottimate is an AI-powered Accounts Payable automation platform that empowers finance teams to reduce costs, prevent overpayments, detect fraud, and enforce policy compliance across the entire invoice-to-payment lifecycle.

Our AI copilot goes beyond traditional automation by applying human-like intelligence, refined over a decade of real-world use, and powered by state-of-the-art Deep Learning. Innovative finance teams use Ottimate to uncover unexpected opportunities across the AP lifecycle, improve efficiency, better manage cash flow, and strengthen profitability.

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