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Aug. 19, 2020



It's a difficult time to be a supplier. As companies conserve cash amid difficult economic conditions, suppliers are often the ones who feel the financial strain. Payment terms get extended. Buyers seek to renegotiate contracts to **optimize their processes** and adapt to new solutions. But then their suppliers are left out of the discussion until they're presented with their marching orders.

Even though a company's first responsibility is **to its bottom line**, it cannot afford to forget that suppliers are ultimately responsible for their ability to deliver revenue. It's

especially important right now that companies take care of their suppliers for the

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dissatisfaction known, from verbally assaulting my unsuspecting colleagues to threatening lawsuits.

When suppliers go to these lengths, it's because they're desperate for action on the buyer's part. In today's environment, their distress is twofold. Payment amounts that seem negligible to buyers make a significant difference to suppliers. The constant flow of payments from AP to AR teams has slowed as companies conserve their funds as long as possible. The ebb and flow of this process has always been present—it's how many companies do business. But this year, suppliers are feeling the strain more than usual.

Increased Collection Pressure

In 2001 and during the Great Recession, we saw that when the economy struggles, finance departments add aggressive collections specialists to their accounts receivable teams to collect overdue money from their customers, relationships aside.

In my experience, AP people are helpful, conscientious, and tough. They have to be, as the liaison between their company and its suppliers. Right now, they're on the front lines, battling to conserve cash. If past downturns are any indication, they're currently bogged down with calls, and morale is dipping as the number of irate callers spikes. What's worse, that stress and emotional exhaustion can cause high turnover rates, which in turn leaves companies in a constant state of training new-hires—a drain on already-limited resources.

From a strategic standpoint, if you're not getting payments to suppliers in a way that's conducive to their operations, they could go out of business. They might also choose to stop working with your company altogether. To them, not all customers are ideal, and as more of them abuse the "customer is always right" notion, suppliers have to withhold the benefit of the doubt and act in self-preservation.

I've experienced both positive and negative aspects of the financial battle. On the one

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customers. By becoming a nuisance in their process, your supply chain could feel the impact. Ultimately, this translates to your inability to generate revenue.

Buyers Care

Fortunately, more companies seem to value their supplier relationships than not. I recently participated in a third-party study to understand what potential payment automation buyers value the most about adopting such a solution. Supplier experience took the third spot after efficiency and fraud protection.

Supplier experience appears in our buyer persona research too. When I meet with customers, they want to ensure that we treat their suppliers well. It's not only part of the company culture they wish to instill in all of their relationships, but they also worry about the impact on their AP team and the supply chain if something goes wrong. They understand any economic impact on their suppliers ultimately translates to higher prices.

Supplier Experience Now

Supplier experience has always been a crucial part of our value proposition as a payment automation solution, and why we continue to focus on building upon the improvements we have already implemented.

We have a dedicated team that supports suppliers on behalf of each customer. Because many customers share the same suppliers, we act as the main point of contact for all of them, which reduces the number of touchpoints a supplier must make to resolve payment issues or update contact or financial information. At the same time, we're flexible. Some of our customers have invested deeply in their supplier relationships, and they still prefer to be involved in communications. In

those cases, we don't have to be the single point of contact. Suppliers can contact us

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Creating a Satisfying Experience

At Nvoicepay, we're always looking at new methods for [supporting customers and suppliers](#) alike. It's our goal to offer better payment products, faster payments, and more real-time data. Our most valuable report cards take supplier opinions into account, and we are proud to consistently receive satisfaction ratings above 98% from the suppliers who interact with us.

Buyers have immense power over suppliers, and sometimes they press that advantage hard. As a payment automation provider, we advocate for and support our customers—the buyers. However, we have found that supplier advocacy results in measurable success for all parties involved.

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Josh Cyphers is the President of [Nvoicepay](#), a FLEETCOR Company. For the past 20 years, Josh has managed successful growth for a variety of companies, from start-ups to Fortune 100 companies. Prior to Nvoicepay, Josh held leadership roles at Microsoft, Nike, Fiserv, and several growth-stage technology companies. Josh is a lapsed CPA, and has a BS in Economics from Eastern Oregon University.

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