



Martyn Jones, chief accountant

STREAMLINING ALSTOM UK'S EXPENSE CLAIMS MANAGEMENT WITH ULYSSE TRAVEL & EXPENSES

With Ulysse Travel & Expenses on the corporate Intranet, Alstom UK's Transport Information Solutions unit keeps paperwork under control and provides valuable cost analysis information. The testimony of Martyn Jones, chief accountant.



If you think filling in your weekly or monthly expense claim is one of the most tedious chores of corporate life, then you would definitely love working for the railway signalling unit of Alstom in the UK. Four years ago, the UK signalling unit of the French industrial blue chip turned a bureaucratic bottleneck into an efficient and streamlined process by implementing Ulysse Travel & Expenses, Etap-On-Line's intranet expenses management solution.

“The system is a great time saver, all necessary information being already in the statement”

This move has made the life of Alstom Transport Information Solutions' chief accountant Martyn Jones a great deal easier. Alstom's UK signalling unit operates from two locations, in Birmingham and Borehamwood, just north of London. "We have a work

force of over one hundred, including close to ten home workers. Every month, about half of our employees submit an expense claim", explains Martyn Jones.

▶ MANAGING EXPENSE CLAIMS ELECTRONICALLY

With the implementation of Ulysse Travel & Expenses on the corporate Intranet, back in 2003, travel expense claims management has been turned into a paperwork free process (although staff still have to obtain receipts in order to comply with the tax rules on benefits and expenses). "We have a company wide agreement with American Express, explains Martyn Jones. All of our staff who incur travel expenses have a charge card, that they use for nearly all of their travel expenses."

Every month, the accounting department receives an electronic statement from American Express which includes details of all expenses. This statement is loaded into Ulysse T&E. Employees copy expense items from their on

line Amex statement to their monthly expense claim. They only need to fill in narrative details to explain what each item was for, and select the appropriate charge code from the available list. Once completed, the claim is directed to the team supervisor for approval, before being sent back to accounting for processing. "The system is a great time saver, underscores Martyn Jones. There is no need to fill in dates and amounts, all necessary information being already in the statement."

▶ LEVERAGING SAP

To make things easier for both employees and Finance staff, Ulysse T&E is connected to the company ERP, under SAP. "For this matter, Ulysse T&E acts as a front end to SAP", explains Martyn Jones. There are three incoming data feeds from SAP to Ulysse T&E. User accounts in Ulysse T&E are created automatically using employee vendor data from SAP.

Cost centre and project charge codes are also uploaded from SAP. Ulysse ▶

T&E expense claim data is the only outgoing data feed from Ulysse T&E to SAP. Claims are posted automatically to employee vendor accounts.

This set up makes everyone's life easier. Employees have access to a centralised expenses management system, with a very shallow learning curve. The company provides them with a comprehensive user guide that enables them to get going in record time. Supervisors and management have a clear view of all expenses in the system.

► CUTTING DOWN ON OVERHEADS

At the end of the day, all involved seem to appreciate the way the system gets the job done, with limited overheads. *"In general, everyone is very pleased with Ulysse T&E. Our previous expenses system was paper based, and Ulysse T&E has reduced the workload for travellers, approvers and the Finance staff"* stresses Martyn Jones. The benefits are many.

“ Ulysse T&E has reduced the workload for travellers, approvers and the Finance staff ”

Ulysse T&E enables users to track their claims through the system. This is particularly beneficial for staff that are out of the office. It also allows the finance department to track the number

and value of claims at the various stages of the process.

With the online American Express statements, users select items to load into their claims. Finance staff no longer have to input claim details manually. This effectively eliminates double typing.

“ Alstom Transport Information Solutions has cut down the cost of managing expense claims by close to 70% ”

Claims with invalid charge codes are no longer received, since all codes are provided directly from SAP. Cost analysis is therefore optimised and accurate.

Finally, Ulysse T&E allows for better expenses reporting. This is particularly useful in the UK, where it facilitates compliance with the tax rules on benefits and expenses. Also, management has a much clearer view on the real costs involved in each project.

With the current implementation of Ulysse Travel & Expenses, Alstom Transport Information Solutions has cut down the cost of managing expense claims by close to 70%. But to reap the maximum benefit, Martyn Jones considers that providing staff



with dedicated charge cards is a key driver : *"Our staff now charge air flights to their American Express cards and receive reimbursement via Ulysse T&E. Previously, air flights were booked through our company travel agent and charged to the company's account with the travel agent. Among the benefits, we see a greater use of low cost airlines. Also, we no longer have any accounts payable problems with the travel agent."* It is also true that having all travel expenses go through the charge cards helps the system reach its maximum efficiency, by eliminating all manual inputs and, ultimately, cutting down the laborious paperwork that nobody really wants to do, either in the Finance department or on each employee's laptop. ■

ETAP-ON-LINE UK
Bourne House 475 Godstone Road Whyteleafe Surrey CR3 0BL
Tel +44 (0)1883 621034 - Fax +44 (0)1883 621031
www.etaponline.co.uk - contact@etaponline.co.uk

ETAP-ON-LINE France
12 rue d' Amsterdam - 75009 Paris
Tél +33 (0)1 70 91 10 00 - Fax +33 (0)1 70 91 10 01
www.ulyssetravel.com - contact@etaponline.fr