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CENTIME WHITEPAPER · FOR FINANCE TEAMS ON NETSUITE

If NetSuite offers AP automation natively, why do other AP solutions exist?

NetSuite added native AP in 2022, and it handles the standard case well. A specialist market keeps growing because AP gets genuinely hard in three places. This is where, and why it matters for your cash.

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Built for NetSuite certified SuiteApp

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> *I've spent fourteen years building AP automation solutions, first at MineralTree and now at Centime, which is a Built for NetSuite certified SuiteApp. I have a stake in this question, and I also have fourteen years of watching exactly where AP breaks. That is what this is about.*

> **The short version:** NetSuite's native AP automation handles clean, standard invoices and payments at modest volume, and companies in that situation should use it and not buy a second system. A large specialist market exists, and keeps growing, because AP gets genuinely hard in three places: document capture and coding, invoice approval and PO matching, and payments with supplier management underneath them. Each one is straightforward in its basic form and difficult at scale, across industries, multiple entities, and borders. That distance, between the basic case and the more nuanced one, is why a market of AP automation providers exists.

A few years ago this question would have sounded strange, because NetSuite didn't offer an AP automation solution at all. That changed in 2022, when NetSuite launched AP Automation at SuiteWorld and embedded HSBC's banking services into the ERP so customers could pay vendors without leaving NetSuite. In 2025 it replaced that arrangement and partnered with BILL to power payments instead. When the dominant mid-market ERP keeps investing in accounts payable automation across multiple SuiteWorlds, it is telling you AP matters. AP sits close to cash and close to control, and the company that holds your ledger wants to hold your payments too.

That raises the real question. After the most important ERP in the mid-market built AP natively, why does the field of providers keep growing? The answer has nothing to do with NetSuite executing badly. It is because AP is harder than it looks, and it gets harder with volume, industry, and scale.

What NetSuite's native AP automation does well

NetSuite is the system of record. It holds the ledger, the chart of accounts, the multi-entity structure through OneWorld, and the audit trail. Its native Bill Capture reads straightforward invoices into vendor bills, SuiteFlow routes approvals, and the BILL-powered rail settles payments, all anchored to one source of truth. For a company processing a modest volume of simple-looking invoices, that is often enough, and those companies should use it rather than bolt on something more elaborate.

NetSuite did not build payment execution itself. It runs through a partner, first HSBC and now BILL. BILL is a proven, reliable way to move money, and it is well suited to a small business. But NetSuite's installed base is mid-market companies, with the multiple entities, higher volumes, and payment requirements and complexity that come with their size. BILL's payment rail, built for small businesses, is a mismatch for this end of the market.

Where AP actually gets hard

AP has three distinct steps: capture and code the invoice, approve it, pay it. Basic solutions, including NetSuite's native AP, do the basic version of each step well. The trouble starts when those simple solutions are stretched to handle more complex, nuanced work.

Document capture and coding. Basic capture and coding works really well on simple, standard invoices. It gets harder with volume, and harder still with industry. The line items, units of measure, and account coding on a manufacturing invoice can be arcane and highly specific, and they look nothing like a construction invoice with its retainage, change orders, and progress billing. Coding that stays accurate across that range, at volume, without a person checking every line, is a different problem from reading a clean one-page PDF. Ardent Partners finds even best-in-class AP teams sit around 49% touchless, and that roughly 82% of departments still key invoices by hand, at $12 to $15 per invoice on IOFM's numbers. Basic capture clears the clean invoices. The manual hours pile up on the rest, the high-volume, industry-specific, non-standard mix a real business actually receives.

Invoice approval and PO matching. One approval rule is easy. Most approval policies at mid-market companies are many-tiered: by amount, by entity, by department, by GL account, with clean delegation when an approver is out, and they keep changing as the company grows. PO matching has the same depth. Beyond lining an invoice up against a purchase order, it often has to match against receipts as well, with flexible rules for partial deliveries, freight and tax tolerances, and the genuine exceptions that need a person.

Payments and supplier management. B2B payments are a tangle of exceptions, variable risk, and variable cost across methods, currencies, and a vendor base that is a mix of small and large businesses, sole proprietors, and overseas entities. Before a single payment goes out, each supplier should ideally be enrolled and validated: confirming the entity is real, that the bank account belongs to it, and that nothing has been changed since the last time you paid. That validation is the front line against business email compromise, the fraud where someone posing as a vendor reroutes a payment to their own account.

The risk is not hypothetical. Business email compromise was the leading avenue of payment fraud in 2024 and hit 63% of organizations, according to the AFP's 2025 Payments Fraud and Control Survey, and the FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center logged about $2.8 billion in BEC losses that year.

Supplier validation is a good and necessary start. Beyond confirming who a supplier is, there is the continuous work of managing the relationship and the terms between payer and payee, the timing, the method, the discount, the financing, so both sides keep control of their cash. Doing that across a large, mixed, and changing vendor base, at scale, is a hard but essential part of a good AP system.

Every one of these gets harder the moment you add entities and borders. A multi-entity business multiplies the approval matrices, the intercompany coding, and the duplicate-vendor risk that comes from the same supplier living in two subsidiaries. Cross-border payments add currencies, longer settlement, foreign banking rules, and another layer of cost and fraud exposure. The basic case rarely stays basic for a company that is growing.

Doing all three well, at scale, without custom implementations and long onboarding cycles, is what makes AP genuinely hard to do. Simple solutions handle the basic case. A whole specialist market exists to serve mid-market businesses with these more specific needs.

Do you control your cash, and profit from it?

The question to ask of any payment model is simple. While your money is in motion, who controls it, and who earns on it?

NetSuite's embedded payments run through BILL, which operates on a "good funds" model. BILL collects the cash from your account, holds it, and releases it to your vendor afterward. While it holds that money in transit, it earns interest on it. BILL reports this as a revenue line called "interest on funds held for customers," which it labels Float Revenue in its own filings, and the numbers are not small.

> **Float Revenue grew from $8.6 million in fiscal 2022 to $167.4 million in fiscal 2024**, about 13% of the company's total revenue that year. As rates have come down it has eased, to roughly $35 million in the quarter ended March 2026, near 9% of revenue, and it still runs about $150 million a year. Across fiscal 2022 through early fiscal 2026, BILL has booked roughly $564 million on customer float.

When your payment provider earns close to a tenth of its revenue on money it holds before disbursing, holding your cash a few extra days is the business model, and the interest in that gap is someone else's revenue line.

Centime is built on the opposite premise: the cash, and the earnings on it, should stay with you. You can pay vendors directly from your own operating account, on your own timing, so the float never leaves your control. Or you can fund an interest-bearing AP disbursement account that pays your vendors and earns a yield on the balance while it waits, 2.25% APY as of late 2025. That account is an option, not a requirement, and either way the money works for you instead of for your provider. We make our revenue on software, not on holding your cash.

Centime is a financial technology company, not a bank. Banking products and services, including the interest-bearing AP disbursement account, are provided by First National Bank of Omaha (FNBO), Member FDIC. The 2.25% APY is as of December 23, 2025, is offered through FNBO, and is subject to change. See centime.com for the current rate and full disclosures.

How AI is changing AP automation

For years the reason to buy a specialist was to automate invoice capture and implement PO matching. AI is turning both into commodities. The newer "agentic" systems do more than extract fields.

An agent can capture an invoice, code it to the right accounts, pull the history of how similar invoices from that vendor were approved, confirm the coding and the approval path stay within policy, and surface only the true exceptions for a person to handle. That turns AP from running a routine and checking every item into managing the few cases that actually need judgment. Greater cost reductions follow: against IOFM's $12-to-$15 manual benchmark, agentic processing is being cited under $3 an invoice, and Forrester expects a third of B2B transactions to involve autonomous agents by 2026.

There is a larger, hidden opportunity in the payment itself. For every bill, an agent can weigh the choices a person rarely has time to make deliberately: the payment method, which liquidity pool to fund it from, the timing, and the discount on offer, then pick the combination that satisfies the cash-control needs of both the buyer and the supplier. Making that call once is straightforward, and rarely done. Making it well on every payment, across a large and mixed vendor base, is judgment that was never practical at human scale and is now in reach.

There is a catch that matters for this whole question. An agent is only as good as the data it reasons over, and the cleanest, most complete financial data lives in the system of record. That raises the value of sitting close to the ERP, which is exactly where a Built for NetSuite application operates. NetSuite's own description of the BILL partnership frames it as agentic workflows you specify in plain language, which tells you where the category is heading.

Making AP strategic: every payable is a cash decision

Centime does all of that well. The reason we built it is bigger than any single feature. Most systems treat a payable as a task to clear. Done right, every payable is a cash decision: pay now or hold, take the early-payment discount or keep the cash, fund the run from your operating account or the interest-bearing one. Those are cash-management decisions, and AP is where a finance team makes them every day.

I spent a decade at MineralTree watching finance teams run AP, AR, and cash forecasting as three disconnected tools and rebuild the cash picture by hand at every close. Centime is built so AP is cash-conscious in the moment. An approved invoice changes your cash position the instant it is approved, and a rolling 13-week forecast, one you can flex to model a decision before you commit to it, tells the team what to pay now, what to hold, and which collections to chase first. AP stops being a queue to clear and starts driving cash decisions.

The architecture makes that possible. Centime is a Built for NetSuite certified SuiteApp, so it runs on the same records as the ledger rather than a copy it has to reconcile and keep in step. AP, AR, and the forecast all read and write that one set of numbers, with no separate integration to build or maintain, so an approved invoice is already in NetSuite the moment it is approved. There is no seam to manage. Some customers tell us they get back more than 20 hours a week that used to go to manual AP, and that the part they did not expect to value is watching an approved invoice move their cash position in real time.

Do you need a third-party AP solution if you're on NetSuite?

The specialist market is the clearest evidence that AP is hard, and each player took a different piece of it:

- **Stampli** built around the collaboration and coding layer.
- **Ramp** folded AP into cards and expense, and pays rebates.
- **Tipalti** went deep on global, multi-currency mass payments.
- **Medius** spent a decade training its capture engine on hundreds of millions of invoices.

Centime goes deep on AP nuance and ties it to cash and working capital. That fits a specific kind of company: a mid-market business on NetSuite, with complex invoices, multiple entities, multi-tier approvals, and payment timing that affects working capital. And for a finance team that sees AP as part of a cash-management strategy, Centime is built to deliver.

If what you process is a low volume of clean invoices through simple workflows, NetSuite's native Bill Capture will serve you, and you should save your money. For everyone past that line, the question is which system does the hard parts well and keeps your cash working for you. That is the bet we built Centime to win.

Common questions

Does NetSuite have native AP automation?

Yes. NetSuite launched AP Automation in 2022, first with HSBC-embedded payments and now powered by BILL. Native Bill Capture reads invoices into vendor bills, SuiteFlow routes approvals, and payments settle inside the ERP, anchored to the ledger.

What are the main limitations of NetSuite's native AP automation?

Three come up most. Approval routing is rigid and usually needs SuiteFlow or SuiteScript work, with thin delegation. Document capture struggles with messy, high-volume, multi-format invoices. And embedded payments run on BILL's "good funds" model, which holds your funds in transit and costs you the float.

Can you keep, or earn, the float on your AP payments?

With Centime, yes. You can pay vendors directly from your own operating account, so the float never leaves your control, or fund an optional interest-bearing AP disbursement account that earns a yield on the balance while payments wait, 2.25% APY as of late 2025. See centime.com for the current rate and full banking disclosures.

What's the best AP automation for NetSuite?

It depends on your volume and complexity. For a low volume of clean, standard invoices, NetSuite's native Bill Capture is the best fit, and a second system is unnecessary. For mid-market companies with complex invoices, multiple entities, layered approvals, global payments, or AP that should feed a live cash forecast, a Built for NetSuite specialist that runs on the same records as the ledger, such as Centime, fits better. Match the choice to the hard parts your team actually has.