

How Absa Transformed Vendor Reconciliations in SAP and Achieved a 98.97% Auto-Match Rate.

Automating supplier statement processing and strengthening financial control with the BEST Vendor Recons module.

Absa Group Limited is one of Africa's largest diversified financial services groups, headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa. The organisation provides a broad range of banking and financial services across retail, business, corporate and investment banking, wealth management, insurance and payments, with operations across multiple African markets.

Within this environment, the Accounts Payable team sits inside Finance Shared Services and supports key financial processes across Record-to-Report and Procure-to-Pay. The team plays a central role in maintaining control over supplier balances, supporting governance, and contributing to a more resilient financial close.

The Challenge

Vendor reconciliations were partially automated using spreadsheets, however the process was time-consuming and not easily scalable.

The team was spending a significant amount of time preparing reconciliations, investigating discrepancies and reworking issues. Data constraints impacted the ability to track outstanding items, support audits efficiently and gain confidence in supplier balances.

Historical reconciliations were particularly challenging. Without a structured way to analyse past data, identifying issues such as duplicate payments, overpayments or missing credits required considerable manual effort and was not always reliable.

The overall process reflected this complexity, with reconciliation activities sitting partly outside SAP. Absa recognised the need to move towards a more controlled, SAP-based process and reduce reliance on manual intervention.

Time-consuming Reconciliation Outside SAP

Poor Historical Visibility

Limited Audit Support

Difficult Anomaly Detection

Automating With BEST in SAP

Absa initiated a strategic effort to automate vendor reconciliations and improve control across the process. As part of this, the team evaluated multiple solutions and selected BEST based on its functionality, automation capabilities and strong alignment with operational requirements. Its seamless integration with SAP S/4HANA made it easier to adopt without introducing additional systems or complexity.

With the BEST Vendor Recons module, Absa established a more structured and automated reconciliation process inside SAP. Supplier statements can now be loaded, matched and reviewed within a single platform, providing clear visibility of balances and exceptions.

The BEST Statement Reader module further reduced manual effort by automatically reading vendor statements in different formats, removing the need for file conversion and reducing spreadsheet related errors. This allows the team to focus more on managing exceptions rather than working through reconciliations line by line.

Absa also implemented a custom enhancement to import SAP ECC cleared data, enabling the team to analyse historical transactions over a five-year period. This has improved visibility and made it easier to identify anomalies such as duplicate payments, duplicated supplier records, overpayments and unaccounted credit notes.

As a result, reconciliation activities including matching, reporting and approvals are now handled within SAP through a more standardised, controlled and fully auditable process.

Implementation Approach

The implementation required careful planning due to the inclusion of historical data and necessary process adjustments. Despite this complexity, the project benefited from strong stakeholder involvement from the outset.

Early collaboration helped identify risks and resolve issues proactively, ensuring the project was delivered in a controlled and structured way with clear ownership across teams.

Results and Impact

Following implementation, Absa achieved a clear improvement in reconciliation performance, efficiency and control, including an auto-match rate of 98.97%, i.e. statement lines matched to SAP data (Open or Cleared FI postings, including postings cleared in the old ECC SAP instance). Manual effort reduced significantly, while visibility over supplier balances and discrepancies improved. Better statement processing and access to historical data also strengthened the team's ability to identify anomalies, support recovery opportunities and improve month-end readiness.

“We’ve transformed our vendor reconciliation process from a manual, spreadsheet-driven approach into a more streamlined, controlled and transparent process. Achieving a 98.97% auto-match rate has improved visibility over supplier balances, strengthened audit readiness, and given the team greater confidence in the accuracy and reliability of reconciliation outcomes.”

Itani Tshivhase, Accounts Payable Manager

Absa now manages vendor reconciliations through a controlled and auditable process within SAP. Reconciliation activities are fully traceable, which has improved audit readiness, reduced audit preparation time and made it easier to respond to internal and external audit requirements.

By bringing reconciliations into a single, standardised SAP platform, Absa has also strengthened trust in reconciliation outputs. Embedded communication, fewer handoffs and a simplified approval process have improved efficiency and control, while reducing manual effort has allowed the team to focus more on exception handling, analysis and process improvement.

The value realised through the Vendor Recons module also created an opportunity for Absa to extend the platform to the BEST General Ledger modules. With standardisation, improved controls and greater transparency already established, Absa could apply the same approach to wider general ledger reconciliation and close activities. Because BEST was already embedded in the Finance operating model, expanding into additional modules became a logical and scalable next step, aligned with Absa’s priorities around operational excellence, risk reduction and a more controlled financial close.

More Reliable Reconciliations

Improved Exception Handling

Simpler Approvals And Handoffs

Faster Audit Response

Better Anomaly Detection

Contact Us Today

See how BEST can help your finance team move vendor reconciliations out of spreadsheets and into a more controlled, auditable process inside SAP.



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