

How Spectrum Brands streamlined audits with 72% auto-approvals

The problem

Limited compliance and review from approving managers

Before implementing AppZen, Spectrum Brands lacked a dedicated auditing solution and relied solely on Concur for expense management. Employees submitted expense reports, which were then routed to managers for approval. Any flagged exceptions were sent to the audit team for review. It was an inefficient process in need of a major change. Managers reviewed only 6% of all receipts, leaving many expenses unchecked.

Nicole Wolff, Accounting Supervisor for T&E at Spectrum Brands, searched for solutions to improve the consistency and compliance of the company's finance function. The results of its first audit solution were disappointing—it took nearly 3 weeks for expense reports to move through the system and receive approval.

Spectrum Brands decided to invest in AppZen's Expense Audit to streamline its auditing process, reduce approval times, and ensure organizational compliance.



"The reason that we wanted to go with AppZen was the ease of use and implementation alongside Concur. We had a lot of things missing in our process, and things like finding duplicates couldn't be done by our team alone."

Nicole Wolff, Accounting Supervisor for T&E,
Spectrum Brands

The solution

A seamless integration with immediate time savings

Using AppZen's integration to SAP Concur, Spectrum Brands seamlessly automated its existing processes with Expense Audit's suite of helpful tools. In just a few weeks, they were able to start rolling out AppZen to their NAMER and Canada offices, while fine-tuning configurations along the way. Next came APAC and EMEA. Within 6 weeks, they had set up a global system that took their expense report processing from 2-3 weeks to 3 hours.

Over the first few months of using Expense Audit, they worked with a Customer Success Manager to analyze the source of high-spend categories and employees with a history of neglecting policies. And they used the AppZen AppStore to configure a set of models that allowed them to reach a **72% auto-approval rate** without any human intervention within the first year of using AppZen.

72%

Auto-approval rate

3

Hour expense approval

560+

Hours saved annually

About the company:

Spectrum Brands is a global leader in home essentials, offering trusted, innovative products that enhance everyday life, from pet care to home maintenance.

Industry:

Manufacturing and Consumer Goods

Employees: 17,000+

AppZen Products:

Expense Audit

The result

Audit team resources focused on analytical tasks

With a customized process in place, Nicole's audit team gained back over 600 working hours, annually. They used that valuable time to track audit performance and make model adjustments based on the historical data of approved versus rejected expenses. Models with the biggest impact included:

Duplicate Across Reports, which identifies and flags a receipt transaction as high risk if it appears in multiple reports, even if it is submitted at different times.

Cashline Validation, which checks whether a corporate credit card has been misused by an employee for personal or out-of-pocket expenses.

Monitored Employees Audit, which flags incoming expense reports from employees with a history of expense violations, risky or fraudulent business behavior, or who work in sensitive roles.

Personal Expense Detection, which allows auditors to flag personal expense items on corporate cards, allowing them to track and control spending at the time of payment.

"It is against policy for employees to use their card for personal expenses. So this model [Personal Expense Detection] allows us to track who's violating this policy regularly, to go back and talk to them."

Looking ahead

Manager insights and advice for other AppZen customers

In a little over a year, Spectrum Brands has seen a significant impact on its expense process. Next, the audit team plans to dive into understanding processes at the manager level and adopt additional Apps from the AppZen AppStore.

Nicole and Expense Analyst, David Weiss, recently shared their advice with fellow customers. Here's what they had to say.

1. Ask your CSM for advice in the early days of implementing AppZen and meet frequently. Their historical knowledge will save you time and resources in your initial configurations.
2. Offer employees training, especially on receipt etiquette. Help them understand what is needed when submitting expense reports so that important data (e.g., transaction date, total amount spent, itemized receipts) is captured right away.
3. Use the Employee Compliance Dashboard to see a list of your top 10 high-risk employees, along with the type of unauthorized spend, categories being flagged, and the total amount of spend.
4. Save time with auto-approvals by setting an allowance for tips based on a specific percentage of the total amount.
5. Analyze cash submissions from employees who aren't using a corporate credit card. Then, set a threshold for flagging spend over a specific amount.

About AppZen

AppZen is the leader in autonomous spend-to-pay software. Its patented artificial intelligence accurately and efficiently processes information from thousands of data sources so that organizations can better understand enterprise spend at scale to make smarter business decisions. It seamlessly integrates with existing accounts payable, expense, and card workflows to read, understand, and make real-time decisions based on your unique spend profile, leading to faster processing times and fewer instances of fraud or wasteful spend. Global enterprises, including one-third of the Fortune 500, use AppZen's invoice, expense, and card transaction solutions to replace manual finance processes and accelerate the speed and agility of their businesses. To learn more, visit us at www.appzen.com.