



The Robert Bosch GmbH opts for digital signature during invoice receipt

Electronic credit-note instead of the old tried and tested paper invoice

The customer

The Bosch Group with approx. 260,000 employees is the leading global supplier of automotive and industrial technology, consumer goods and building technology.

The group comprises a production, sales and customer service network with approx. 300 subsidiaries and more than 12,000 customer service companies in over 140 countries. In Germany alone, more than 110,000 employees are employed at 60 manufacturing sites. The network of the suppliers that "invoices" the Bosch Group for their services is correspondingly large. To keep costs as low as possible, the Bosch Group has already practiced the credit-note procedure with its suppliers for years.



The aim

Even though Robert Bosch GmbH practiced the credit-note procedure with its suppliers, the costs for the handling were still high and optimization of the process made good sense. Innumerable credit-notes had to be created, printed, sent and archived internally every day. The aim, however, was to issue and send no more credit-notes to the suppliers in paper form if possible. All processes should take place solely electronically if possible in order to reduce costs, accelerate processes and avoid manual errors.

While doing so, it was necessary to make sure that electronic invoices and thus also credit-notes had to be provided with qualified personal signatures (see §14 Sales Tax Law). Only in this way do they comply with the legal regulations and enable the deduction of input tax.

In addition to this, the company wanted to find a solution that gained a high level of acceptance and did not require any changes at all in their processes. This meant that the legally valid signature and archiving of signed credit-notes had to be provided for and a solution had to be offered for the signature verification.

At the same time, the suppliers should have optimal possibilities for further processing the electronic credit-notes. Hence, a signature solution was required, which prepares the credit-note data in various formats that are compatible with SAP in particular.



SUCCESS STORY

The implementation

▪ Credit-note portal with signature function

The IT service provider of the Robert Bosch GmbH operates a credit-note portal for generating credit notes. The suppliers have access to the credit-note data via this portal. The portal has been extended to incorporate the eBilling Signature Server of AuthentiDate. This takes over the qualified personal signature of all credit-notes. Consequently, these comply with the regulations of the Sales Tax Law and the EU Invoice Directive. In this way, legally valid credit-notes without additional paper documents are available both to the credit-note sender (Robert Bosch GmbH) and to all suppliers.

▪ Smooth, fast integration

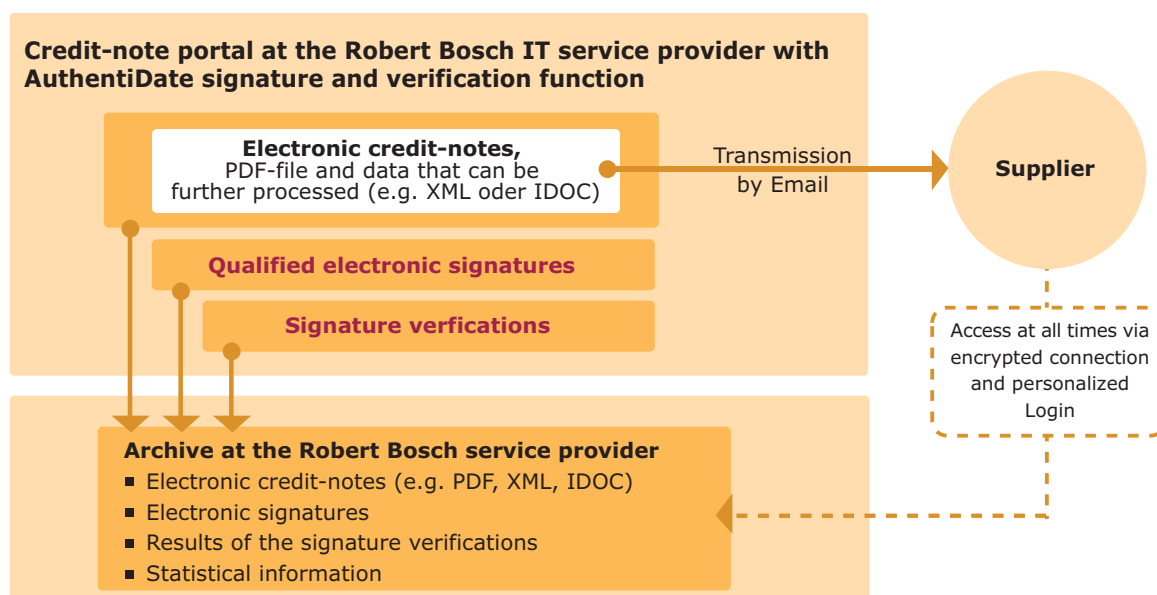
When choosing the signature solution, Bosch attached great importance to the fact that this should be integrated as easily as possible – "plug & play" – into the existing environment. This required that the credit-note data could be signed and sent by the signature solution by email and in the form of files, thus ensuring that electronic credit-notes could also be sent automatically to the suppliers by email. Thanks to the standard interfaces and extensive policy, the existing infrastructure at the Bosch service provider could be extended to incorporate the AuthentiDate signature solution within just a few days.

▪ Files that can be further processed

The credit-notes are provided as a PDF file and as data that can be further processed (e.g. XML, IDOC) in order to make it easier for the suppliers to further process the credit-notes. Therefore, an essential criterion for the choice of software was that it could sign data of different formats and "switch" between different formats (e.g. PDF and IDOC) according to requirements. This is possible with the AuthentiDate signature solution. Additional formats can also be signed if necessary. Hence, the requirements of the suppliers can be addressed very flexibly and the electronic credit-notes created optimally to ensure further processing.

▪ Legal security

Finally, a decisive demand of the Robert Bosch GmbH was made on the signature solution regarding conformity with the law and international implementation. The AuthentiDate solution uses qualified personal signatures. These comply with the German Signature Act and EU Signature Directive. In order to verify compliance with the various accounting regulations stipulated for electronic, signed invoices or credit-notes, the signature software was additionally certified by one of the world's leading auditing companies.



Exemplary representation: Section of electronic credit-note procedure



SUCCESS STORY

■ Central archiving

As an additional benefit for the suppliers, the archive system already used at the Robert Bosch IT service provider was linked to the portal with signature function. All data is archived there immediately after the signature. At the same time, the signatures are verified for each credit-note via the Signature Check Server also provided by AuthentiDate. The result of the signature verification is archived together with the credit-note data and the signature. Consequently, all relevant data is always available to the company and to the suppliers at a central location.

The central archiving of signed credit-note data simplifies the process because some smaller suppliers in particular do not have electronic archive systems at their disposal and therefore could only archive the electronic credit-notes by means of additional resources, e.g. by burning it onto a CD-ROM. All suppliers are now relieved of these tasks easily, automatically and transparently.

The benefits

- ▶ **Reduction of costs for printing, stuffing envelopes and mailing**
- ▶ **Data can be further processed in the ERP-/SAP system:**
 - Process optimization and avoidance of human data entry errors by means of automatic process
- ▶ **Cost saving by reducing the paper archive and electronic long-term archiving**
- ▶ **Faster retrieval of credit-notes**
- ▶ **Electronic forwarding of original documents without additional scanning of paper copies, e.g. verification by employees at different locations**
- ▶ **Statistical information, e.g. regarding the invoice items in Excel files that can be analyzed easily**

■ Signature verification

In order to make it as easy as possible for the suppliers to handle the signed credit-notes, the Robert Bosch IT service provider also carries out the legally required signature verification of all credit-notes. This takes place automatically on behalf of the suppliers by the AuthentiDate Signature Check Server. As described above, all results of the signature verifications are archived centrally at the service provider and are available for retrieval by the suppliers any time. In addition to this, Robert Bosch offers all suppliers the possibility to carry out the signature verifications themselves. Hence, an independent check can be carried out any time on request. For this purpose, Robert Bosch uses the signature check service www.signature-check.de. The web service is available in several languages especially for international business contacts. The service enables signatures created by Bosch to be verified from any workplace with an Internet connection without additional software.

Technical benefits

- ▶ **Free choice of format (e.g. PDF, IDOC) enables optimal further processing**
- ▶ **International useability by means of qualified signatures in compliance with the German Signature Act and EU Signature Directive**
- ▶ **Security by means of software certification by one of the world's leading auditing companies**
- ▶ **Email and file-based distribution of signed data enables smooth integration in credit-note portal**
- ▶ **Automatic confirmation of delivery by corresponding email configuration**
- ▶ **Web service for signature verification available in several languages for international business relations**



About the Robert Bosch Group

The Bosch Group is a leading global supplier of technology and services. In the areas of automotive and industrial technology, consumer goods, and building technology, some 260,000 associates generated sales of 43.7 billion euros in fiscal 2006. The Bosch Group comprises Robert Bosch GmbH and its roughly 300 subsidiary and regional companies in over 50 countries. This worldwide development, manufacturing, and sales network is the foundation for further growth. Bosch spends more than three billion euros each year for research and development and in 2006 applied for over 3,000 patents worldwide. The company was set up in Stuttgart in 1886 by Robert Bosch (1861-1942) as "Workshop for Precision Mechanics and Electrical Engineering."



"We have always supported our suppliers actively with the further development of their competence and professional expertise. This is also why we have opted for the AuthentiDate signature solution. Not only does it create benefits for our company by reducing costs thanks to the discontinued practice of sending paper-based credit-notes, for example, but our suppliers also benefit from this solution because they can further process electronic credit-note data directly without entering the data manually."

Horst Bawidamann (Service Division for Information Technology
eBusiness Applications eCommerce, Robert Bosch GmbH, Stuttgart)

About AuthentiDate

AuthentiDate is a specialist for electronic signatures and time stamps and the initiator of the concept of central, electronic signatures en mass. Hence, business processes such as invoicing and invoice reception, scanning, document management and archiving can be replicated electronically according to the legal requirements.

The AuthentiDate signature solutions have been used for many years by companies that are active nationally and internationally and enable cost reduction and process optimization by replacing paper processes.

AuthentiDate solutions take the strict restrictions of the German Signature Act and the European Signature Directive into account and are certified for use in the necessary areas in accordance with the German Commercial Code, the German Charges Regulations and German Accounting Principles. AuthentiDate International AG was accredited in 2001 by the German Federal Network Agency (BNetzA) and operates a Trust Center especially for time stamps services in accordance with signature law.

The AuthentiDate corporate group is listed on the NASDAQ Stock Exchange (USA) under the symbol ADAT.



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Version: 001