



Alfred Strop,
Atos

'I want to eliminate any
reason not to pay'

Atos SE (Societas Europaea) is an international IT services company with 76,300 employees in 52 countries. Atos is focused on business technology that powers progress and helps organisations to create their firm of the future. Atos provides IT services in three areas: Consulting & Systems Integration, Managed Services & BPO and transaction services through its businessline Worldline. Atos is the Worldwide Information Technology Partner for the Olympic & Paralympic Games and is listed on the NYSE Euronext Paris market.

Results

- DSO has decreased and keeps a downward trend
- Overdue balance is structurally below 10%
- Reduction of disputes that delay payments
- OnGuard provides structure
- OnGuard combines automation and flexibility

Alfred Strop, Manager Treasury, Cash Management & Credit Control Benelux & The Nordics, Atos

- 'If the relationship and service are good customers are happy to pay for it.'
- 'The integration of complaints is visible in the number of overdue invoices.'
- 'The DSO is structurally good and continues to show a downward trend.'
- 'Focus during the entire process is important: from the acceptance of the customer, the credit checks to the collection of invoices.'
- 'Pro-active credit management is the right approach nowadays and in the future.'
- 'I am an active member of the OnGuard User Group since 2008 because it is important and fun to be involved with the development of the software.'

Alfred Strop:

'The flexibility in OnGuard leaves openings for a personal vision and assessment by the credit manager'



Focus on cash

Atos has a strong focus on three projects: Expand for increase of our turnover, Top for the improvement of our margin and cash and the program wellbeing@work for our employees. These are published in every quarterly report and are important for the stock market. Strop: 'Turnover and profit are crucial, but the latter must actually be booked and that is the scope of our credit management. In practice, this means that I'm involved from the adoption of the customer, the credit checks to collecting the invoice.'

Integrated credit management

Strop: 'I consider credit management as an extension of the business; it is a joint responsibility to get payments in within the agreed timeframe. Creating awareness is essential and credit management should have continuous attention. The speed of payment is an indication of the relationship with the customer and the quality of service in my opinion. If the relationship and service are good, customers are satisfied and happy to pay for it more quickly.'

Relationship with the customer

A good relationship with the customer comes first for Atos. Strop: 'We provide services to our customers from different divisions, but for them Atos is one single supplier. My message to all departments: we are jointly responsible for good credit management and thus a healthy cash position. It is part of our corporate image. Focusing on the complete O2C process can prevent 'issues' at the end. Transparency and sharing the right information is essential: If a customer tells his contract manager that something is not going well, it is important that credit management hears about it. This can prevent unnecessary or wrong actions and save time and money.'

The integration of complaints in credit management has proved to be very successful. Strop: 'If a payment is (too) late, we never ask 'Why haven't you paid yet?', but we inquire whether there is a reason not to pay. We consciously choose this positive approach because it allows for a dialogue. We are also paying a lot of attention to ongoing disputes, which has changed the number of disputes from a relatively high number to a structurally low number. A good follow-up of complaints is directly visible in the number of overdue invoices. This shows that our focus and commitment to ensure that a customer has no reason not to pay is bearing fruit.'

Why OnGuard?

'The user friendliness and flexibility of the software are vital. I have been a member of the OnGuard User Group since 2008 because it is important and fun to be involved with the development of the software. But also to learn from and share experiences with other credit managers. Pro-active credit management is the right approach now and in the future. OnGuard provides structure and makes it possible to automate part of the work, but also offers the flexibility to decide to diverge from the 'original' planning. The vision and assessment of the credit manager remains the most important component, his insight in all available information, allows him to assess what action fits best at what point to generate the best result.'

Communication

'Since I began working at Atos, we have achieved good DSO scores. But it is even more important that the DSO is structurally sound and continues to show a downward trend. I am pleased with our results, and so is the rest of the organisation. Our focus and commitment to ensure that a customer has no reason not to pay continues to be successful.'