

Bringing Order & Control to a Taxing Situation

American Psychological Association

Lena Thompson, Director of Building Operations and Administrative Services



The Challenge

It's no small undertaking to manage nine conference rooms and host more than 100 meetings and events a month for the American Psychological Association (APA), one of the largest scientific and professional organizations in the U.S. But for Lena Thompson, Director of Building Operations and Administrative Services, it's just part of the job. Among many other job responsibilities, Lena oversees the APA's catering support services division, which handles all event logistics including catering.

Before Seamless, the organization lacked security and control over who was ordering food, how much they were spending and how many different vendors were being used. Staff would often order from their favorite caterer or restaurant creating up to 40 different invoices a week, and often with amounts that were excessive. Keeping track of all the invoices proved challenging for accounting. Many invoices were lost or misplaced, which often resulted in them being past due and the APA being charged late fees. The organization also faced issues with caterers who double billed and issued invoices riddled with mistakes. But the challenges went further due to the fact that the APA needed to track which program each invoice should be billed to. Often this information was missing, incomplete or inaccurate and this created additional rounds of investigation work for the accounting team.

Additionally, within the association, there are certain programs that are tax exempt. Ensuring that caterers applied the tax exempt status was hit or miss. "It was a real challenge to get the billing straight with caterers, who may or may not understand our tax exempt status," shares Lena. "We were often charged the tax when we weren't supposed to, which forced us to go back and request a refund. This was time-consuming and not particularly effective."

To bring order and control to a truly taxing food-ordering process, the APA selected Seamless.

The Seamless Solution

Since 2008, the APA has been using Seamless to manage its catering needs, as well as to order meals for last minute meetings and group lunches. The organization uses one Seamless account, from which a handful of designated

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staff, ranging from administrative to executive level, have the authority to place orders, each is provided with an account number that must be entered on the checkout page. This number ensures that new security controls, which the APA was able to put in place thanks to Seamless, are enforced. Additionally, staff is required to enter a program number, which helps accounting track the purpose of the order and manage internal billing.

Lena's team, and those with ordering permission, can select from a breadth of food choices, which includes many of their favorite caterers and restaurants. Rather than processing numerous individual invoices, the organization now receives just one, consolidated invoice each month for all orders. Additionally, by using Seamless to manage all its food orders the APA's tax exempt status is always applied to the appropriate orders.

The Result

By moving to a centralized food-ordering system, the APA reduced the number of food-related invoices it processes from more than 150 to a handful of invoices each month. And by eliminating issues with tax status, invoicing errors, and late fees, Seamless has created a more efficient—and happier—accounting department who now can accurately track and forecast program costs.

"Because all our food orders come in through Seamless, I can verify all orders at once, in just a matter of minutes, and then send it through for payment," shares Sonya Paine, APA Purchasing Manager. "With Seamless, this process is fast, easy and there are no mistakes. That saves us a substantial amount of money".

With Seamless the APA now has a way to see how much the organization and individual programs spend on catering. This added insight helps the group identify over-spenders and improve its expense ratios.



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