

# Calming a Chaotic Process:

Tracking billable meals and consolidating house accounts

DLA PIPER

Michael Farino, Hospitality Manager



## The Challenge

Michael Farino is the Hospitality Manager for the New York office of DLA Piper (DLA), one of the world's largest business law firms. Michael and his team oversee the firm's meal program and all catering and special events. With 500 employees in the office and dozens of client meetings and special events each month, this is no small task.

Like many law firms, DLA needs to keep a highly accurate record of all expenses billed to a client, particularly food-related expenses. These are often regulated as part of a client contract or company meal policy. Prior to using Seamless, DLA had two main challenges: 1 – enforcement of the firm's meal policy, which was based largely on the honor system; and 2 – the process of tracking expenses, reimbursing employees, and billing out to clients, which was manual, time-consuming and highly error prone. Unfortunately, it was common for the Finance department to find that they didn't have the necessary information about a meal and therefore it could not be billed out to a client. It was a wild goose chase with the Finance team trying to track down the appropriate GL code and billing information, and the firm was often left with little choice but to absorb these costs. A lot of time and money was being wasted.

In addition to ordering food for individual employee meals, DLA also does a large amount of catering for internal events and client meetings. Before Seamless, DLA maintained multiple house accounts with their preferred caterers. This required processing multiple invoices each month and offered no easy way to track spending and capture important billing information.

From the lawyers and legal staff working late to the hospitality and finance teams, DLA needed a service that would streamline and overhaul the food-ordering process while consolidating and simplifying the payment and reporting processes. DLA turned to Seamless to address their chaotic process, while expanding the variety of food options available to employees.

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“People would definitely be more than a little upset if we tried to take Seamless away from them—lunch has become part of our culture.”

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## The Seamless Solution

DLA worked with Seamless to create a set of rules that would govern when and how employees could order food. Each and every one of DLA's 500 NYC-based employees was given a username and password. Everyone was free to log-in and order their own meals. Everyone was also assigned to a specific budget group. These budget groups are based each person's role at the firm and can accommodate different spending limits and permission levels. As Michael notes, “right away, Seamless gave us the power to enforce our rules, but still be flexible so people get what they need. It's a win-win.”

The second part of the implementation was to ensure that critical billing information and GL codes were captured at the point of purchase. This would ensure that DLA was not absorbing costs that should be billed out to a client. Seamless customized the checkout page to ensure that no one placed an order without providing this vital information. Seamless validates the GL codes entered by users in real time to ensure it is an active and correct code. The delivery address is set to be the office address so that there is no risk of abuse. Only meals delivered to the office are covered by the meal program.

The process that helped streamline the individual meals process would also help improve the efficiency of the catering process. The same customized checkout page that captures important budget information is used for catering orders and all orders are included on DLA's consolidated invoice.

Seamless also improved the hospitality team's communication with caterers. Michael and his team use the checkout page to provide special set-up instructions to the caterers. Working with the hospitality team, Seamless has tailored the menu options for their favorite caterers, which allows Michael and his team to easily customize high-end meals

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for the Partners and special events. The ability to maintain a close relationship with caterers is very important to Michael, who has worked closely with his preferred caterers for years. "With Seamless, you don't lose the personal touch. I have great relationships with my caterers and work closely with them to create custom menu items for our events."

DLA signed a national agreement with Seamless, which makes it easy for offices in other cities to implement Seamless and take advantage of the customized checkout process that was developed specifically for DLA.

## The Result

It has been 8 years since DLA implemented Seamless and they continue to place all their food orders through Seamless today. Employees love it for the selection and ease of use. In fact, many lawyers at DLA consider a Seamless account to be an indispensable part of their job. Michael loves it for the positive impact it has on his job. "Seamless is wonderful because it saves so much time. We used to have to check expense reports for budgets, review invoices, assign the right codes – it was total paperwork havoc." He added, "Now, there is no time and no involvement at all. Unless I want to run a report, there is literally no looking at a bill because Seamless makes sure it's on budget and that the right information is there. I simply approve the charges and then Finance pays it! And it's not just time savings for me. It saves a ton of time for the lawyers who no longer fill out expense reports and also for the Finance team who isn't processing all those checks. All the time savings adds up to huge cost savings."

Everyone agrees the business benefits are the most important, but when you ask Michael what is his favorite thing about Seamless, his answer doesn't surprise anyone. "The variety. There are just so many great options!"

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"It saves a ton of time for lawyers who no longer do expense reports and for the finance team who isn't processing all those checks."

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## About Seamless

Seamless is an online food-ordering service that makes it easy to feed the office. We provide companies and their employees with access to more than 11,000 restaurants and caterers, offering fast and convenient online ordering and sending just one invoice for all orders placed. From individual meals and late-night group orders, to catered meetings and blowout parties, Seamless makes it easy to keep your hungry offices happy.

