VERSAPAY | ENNIS FABRICS

From mailroom marathon to instant delivery: How Ennis Fabrics cut manual billing 95% with an invoicing portal

At a glance impact

95% reductions

Invoices mailed monthly.

7 days

Invoices mailed monthly.

1 full-time employee

Dedicated mailing staff.

0.125% to 100%

Customers paying digitally.

Introduction

Ennis Fabrics, international wholesaler of fabrics and supplies, is headquartered in Sherwood Park, Alberta, and operates warehouses in Mississauga, Vancouver, and Indianapolis, plus a clearing facility in Ningbo, China.

Curtis Whitelock, Systems Analyst at Ennis Fabrics, sits between the database and business side of its ERP, translating operational needs into system capabilities. He's helped influence Ennis Fabrics' growth for over 30 years, as a consultant and a full-time employee.

For decades, issuing invoices at Ennis Fabrics meant printers, folders, envelopes, and designated employees camped out in a mailroom for days on end. Today, the same job happens automatically and instantaneously, with Ennis Fabrics securely delivering always-accessible, branded, electronic invoices through their payment portal.

The challenge

The human and business costs of maintaining a labor-intensive, paper-driven invoicing process

Before Versapay, Ennis Fabrics mailed paper invoices on a schedule tailored to each customer (daily, weekly, or monthly), while also emailing invoices to a subset of them. At its peak, it was folding, stuffing, and mailing over 10,000 invoices monthly.

Just prior to moving to Versapay, the monthly volume of printed invoices was about 6,000. Emailing the remaining invoices was done using a third-party solution (which Versapay has since replaced). The emailed invoices offered little reprieve, with customers often claiming they were never received, leading the credit team to chase payments while still preparing physical invoices.

"At one point, we had a production rated laser printer and a room that we put everything into and tried to environmentally control. **Somebody would be sitting in that room for two days straight,** they would grab the pages off the printer, walk them over to the folder stuffer, put them in with inserts, hit go, and watch for errors. Then we'd take all the envelopes, run them through the mailing machine, and get them over to the post office."

Curtis Whitelock, Systems Analyst, Ennis Fabrics

The mailing crunch cost labor hours and created added downstream challenges:

Delayed invoices meant delayed payments: Under this manual process, invoicing took roughly two internal processing days plus added mail transit time. Curtis estimates customers were at least seven days out from receiving their invoices once postal delays were factored in. If the customer were in the United States, it would take even longer.

Early-payment discount customers lost out: Some customers received discounts for making payments within 15 days, and if their invoices were caught in a delayed mailing run, they had no chance of hitting that window. (Now that customers can instantly receive their invoices and submit the requisite payments, this issue has been resolved.)

Disputes over who was at fault: Customers who received late invoices refused to pay late fees, arguing that delays were Ennis Fabrics' mistake rather than theirs.

Staff were pulled from their primary jobs: The mailing rush wasn't a formal part of most employees' job descriptions, and instead was something that fell to whoever was available, often at the expense of their actual responsibilities.

> "**We didn't need two full-time employees** sitting and dealing with stuffing and mailing invoices on a regular basis."
>
> **Curtis Whitelock,** Systems Analyst, Ennis Fabrics

Manual check processing carried risk of data entry error

Payments arrived predominantly by check or credit card, because of Ennis Fabrics' roughly 16,000 customers, very few were set up for electronic payment.

Accordingly, staff would manually key check values into their ERP when the check scanner failed to process them, then rely on a second employee to double-check entries. The process for handling credit card payments required third-party software to take the payment and then enter it into their ERP. This process was prone to human error as well.

The decision

A twofold strategy: remove human error while creating a seamless, branded accounts receivable experience

The decision to implement Versapay was methodically made, with Ennis Fabrics' Controller and CFO driving vendor evaluation and shortlisting Versapay before greenlighting the project.

It moved through a series of internal checkpoints, with the team regularly confirming the investment made sense before progressing.

Importantly, Ennis Fabrics determined from the start that whichever accounts receivable automation software they selected needed to remove human error from their payment data entry process.

Notably, Ennis Fabrics staff most burdened by the manual mailing process welcomed the change.

One added requirement shaped how Ennis Fabrics rolled out Versapay: digital invoices had to be indistinguishable from the printed ones customers were used to.

This meant having the same logos, spacing, and fonts, and having the ability to add custom messaging like holiday closure notices. For Ennis Fabrics, this wasn't about technical box-checking; it was about protecting a carefully built brand.

"The people that were tasked with physically printing and folding and stuffing and mailing invoices would ask, 'Can you take this off my plate? Can we help?' **There wasn't any resistance from this group.**"

Curtis Whitelock, Systems Analyst, Ennis Fabrics

"When our customers go online and look at their invoices, we need them to look as close as humanly possible to their printed invoices. If you put them side by side, if there is a difference, it needs to be very, very minor. **They shouldn't be able to tell the difference between what they're looking at online or what they got in the mail.**"

Curtis Whitelock, Systems Analyst, Ennis Fabrics

The results

6 ways Versapay Collaborative AR modernized Ennis Fabrics' accounts receivable processes

1. Manual mailing volume down to a fraction of its former scale: What was once more than 10,000 invoices printed, stuffed, and mailed manually every month is now fewer than 500.

Today, 95% of all invoices* are delivered electronically and automatically through Versapay's customer-facing payment portal. And through this portal, Ennis Fabrics can validate who has (or has not) reviewed their invoices.

Ennis Fabrics services a cohort of customers whose culture prohibits the use of modern technology, keeping this electronic invoice delivery figure below 100%.

2. Dedicated mailing staff freed for their actual jobs: The full-time positions once needed just to manage regular mailing (plus the seasonal surge of temporary staff every month end), are no longer needed.

Staff who previously tag teamed between mailing duties and their contracted responsibilities, often falling behind on their actual work in the process, no longer face that tradeoff.

3. Invoice delivery time dropped from days to instantaneous: Under the manual invoicing process, Curtis estimates Ennis Fabrics customers received their invoices roughly seven days after issuance once mail transit was factored in.

Today, invoice delivery is instantaneous.

This shift also removed a recurring pain point for customers on early-payment discount terms, who previously risked missing their window entirely if their invoices were caught in a delayed mailing run.

4. A dramatic shift toward electronic payments: Before Versapay, a mere fraction of a percent (0.125%, or about 20 of Ennis Fabrics' roughly 16,000 customers) paid their invoices electronically.

Today, electronic payment is simply part of being a customer; if they're onboarded to Versapay's collaborative customer payment portal, they're making payments electronically.

> "Being able to automate invoicing through **Versapay meant our staff didn't have any roadblocks** to getting their regular jobs completed."
>
> **Curtis Whitelock,** Systems Analyst, Ennis Fabrics

5. Human error nearly entirely removed from payment entry: Ennis Fabrics still manually processes the small remaining volume of paper checks it receives, complete with review checkpoints when payments are keyed by hand.

But for payments now flowing through Versapay, payment data entry risk is virtually nonexistent, as the platform is configured to receive and send data to and from Ennis Fabrics' ERP, Sage X3, thanks to a simple file-based integration.

6. An unplanned win: fewer inbound service calls: One benefit to implementing Versapay's collaborative payment portal that Curtis hadn't expected was that customers would stop calling into Ennis Fabrics' service center to request copies of their invoices, as they're now able to retrieve them at their leisure, directly from within the portal.

> "We implemented this [Versapay], and now **customers don't have to phone in to our call centers** and ask for copies of their invoices. They can go online. They can go into the payment portal and it's going to be there."
>
> **Curtis Whitelock,** Systems Analyst, Ennis Fabrics

> "Anywhere you're relying on human interaction or human input, you introduce the potential for human error. It's just part of the equation. How many full-time employees are you paying to get invoices out, to get payments in, every single month? **Would you rather reduce that headcount and get automation to take care of it instead?**"
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> **Curtis Whitelock,** Systems Analyst, Ennis Fabrics

The takeaway

When asked how he'd frame the value of this type of investment to a peer facing similar challenges, Curtis pointed out two things: the inherent risk of manual, human-driven processes, and the resourcing cost of running them at scale.

VERSAPAY

About Versapay

Versapay automates accounts receivable, removing barriers to collecting and reconciling B2B payments. Our solutions connect finance teams, customers, and business systems in one ecosystem to ensure cash flow clarity. With over 10,000 customers and 5M+ companies transacting on the platform, Versapay processes over 110M transactions and $300B annually. Learn more at versapay.com.