

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

OCU Group: Scaling with confidence - enhancing governance and strengthening the supply chain

Utilities and digital infrastructure specialist, OCU Group, uses Payapps to strengthen its operations and ensure a competitive supply chain.



Digital workflows and format standardisation has reduced OCU's rejection of applications to <5%



Collaboration and visibility across departments has reduced admin and improved accuracy



Transparency and an expedited payment process has strengthened supply chain relationships

The Challenges

- **As project volumes increased, so were the number of subcontractor applications for payment needing to be managed – manual and spreadsheet methods were not scalable.**
- **Payment process inefficiencies were risking regulatory compliance**
- **Manual administration of applications were starting to cause bottlenecks, potentially delaying subcontractor payments which would mean weakening supply chain cash flow.**

OCU Group had been reliant on a manual, paper-based payment process for many years. As other businesses are finding across the industry, recruitment was proving difficult, and this meant handling the large volume of applications from a growing number of projects and subcontractors was becoming a challenge.

The team realised the need to digitise and automate the process, to remove the risk being posed to administrative efficiency, payment process visibility, regulatory compliance and timely supply chain payments.

Peter Vevers, Commercial Director of Utility Services, explained, "Before Payapps, our team was drowning in paperwork and spreadsheets, which resulted in constant inconsistencies and delays. If someone was away from the business, we couldn't see whether an application had been responded to, which not only delayed subcontractor payments but put us at risk under the Housing and Grants Act."

As a business focused on not just being the biggest but the best, OCU Group places huge emphasis on process



OCU Group
Energy Transition Utilities & Digital Infrastructure

- **Founded in 1994 by Tim and Tom O'Connor, headquartered in Stockport, Greater Manchester**
- **Reported record revenues for the financial year ending April 2025, reaching £866 million – a 42% increase on the previous year**
- **Delivers customer-focused solutions, covering electricity, gas, water, rail, telecoms and directional drilling**
- **Employs around 5,000 staff**

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and governance controls, so there was a concern over the potential for non-compliance with industry regulations.

Chris Corrie, Group Commercial Director, revealed, “The process for paying the supply chain was very manual. While it was governed closely, it gave us a lot of risks and exposure to legislation challenges. In fact, it was a very paper-based exercise that was susceptible to manual error.”

Acknowledging its need to streamline the process and ensure greater accuracy and transparency, OCU Group implemented Payapps across its utilities division. Significantly reducing the company’s reliance on paper and spreadsheets, this move marked a critical step in modernising and de-risking the organisation’s payment processes.

The Solution

- **Automation of a standardised application for payment process, providing a centralised view and one source of truth for OCU Group and its supply chains.**
- **Real-time visibility of application for payment status for OCU Group and its subcontractors - ensuring timely, compliant actioning of applications and**
- **payment notices, and time saved that had been previously spent chasing certifications and payments.**
- **First-class, highly responsive support from the Payapps team, offering guidance and advice to both OCU Group and subcontractors during set-up and beyond.**

Having quadrupled in size over recent years, OCU Group required scalable software to automate workflows and improve productivity. Commercial Director, Peter Vevers, revealed how Payapps helps commercial and finance departments work efficiently together. He said, “When a payment is certified in Payapps, it moves directly into our accounting software, where it goes through a separate compliance check before flowing through for payment. This all happens now without any printing, scanning or emails – and it’s working really well.”

Timely actioning of applications, payment notices and certifications was also a necessity for Construction Act adherence as Group Commercial Director, Chris Corrie, explains, “The protection the software brings by ensuring our legislative compliance was certainly a big focus for us. We’re an acquisitive business, so the intuitive workflows in Payapps ensure businesses new to us quickly integrate and adhere to our robust processes.”



Chris Corrie also praised the flexibility of Payapps, saying, “Since we went live in November 2024, we’ve put £270 million worth of payments through the system. The flexibility of Payapps to accommodate the different models and supply chain valuation methods – because we’re such a diverse group – is one of the key strengths of the system.”

OCU Group needed a system that allowed everyone involved to have real-time access and visibility of all applications for payment in one easy-to-understand system.

Josh Warburton, Senior Quantity Surveyor, explains, “In the past, everything came through via emails which are easy to lose track of. Whereas, with Payapps, it’s all in one system. You get an email notification when an application for payment comes in, so you can’t really miss anything, even if someone is off.”

OCU Group’s Subcontractor Payments Manager, Samantha Robey, commented, “It’s just streamlined everything and gives us better visibility. The reporting is great too. We can get information very quickly and look at trends, and use these to forecast.”

Additionally, it helps junior members of the team who are keen to better understand the subcontractor payment process. Apprentice Quantity Surveyor, Amy Witts, explained, “Payapps has been really good. It’s massively helped just with my general knowledge of the construction industry and the end-to-end processing of a payment – from who applies to who certifies, and how that is done.”

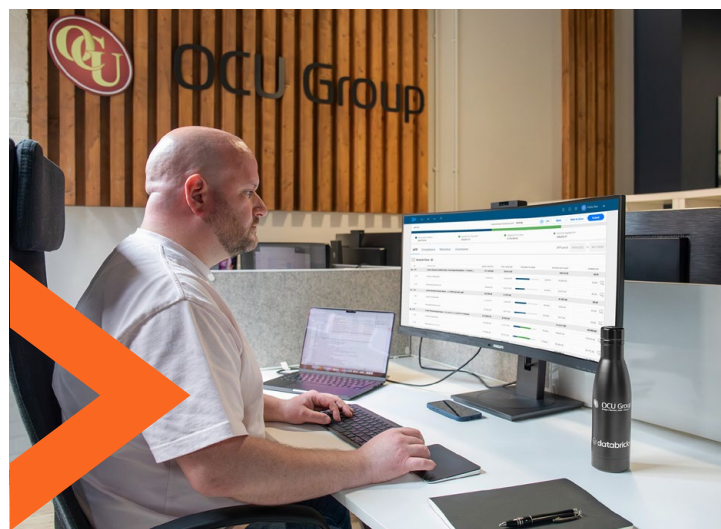
“The support from Payapps has been really good. They’re really helpful and reply quickly. If there’s ever any updates to the system, we’re always notified about it. Support-wise, there’s absolutely no complaints at all.”

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The Results

- **Greater consistency:** Digital workflows and format standardisation has reduced rejection of applications to less than 5%.
- **Increased accuracy:** Volume of invoice rejections, credits and re-invoicing has reduced now inaccurate spreadsheets are no longer relied upon to communicate certified application values.
- **Improved productivity:** Certifications have more than doubled in a 12-month period, from around 800 to 2000, with no need to increase finance team headcount.
- **Reduced administration:** Manual spreadsheets and paperwork are eliminated, making it quicker and easier to submit, assess and manage thousands of applications across multiple contracts.
- **Stronger supply chain relationships:** Transparency, a clear audit trail and reliable payments mean subcontractor trust and collaboration is significantly strengthened.
- **Fewer disputes:** Better data visibility as a result of Payapps' easy to access system has helped improve communication and reduce misunderstandings across teams.

Minimised errors and greater consistency: Subcontractors now submit their applications for payment in a standardised format. Common issues like incorrect address, or not displaying the correct information is a thing of the past and as a result, rejection of applications has been reduced from 60-70% to under 5%.



There has been a reduction in invoice rejection too. Lee Jones, Energy Commercial Director at OCU Group, explained, "Now the certifications are visible to our subcontractors in Payapps, there's no need to send them spreadsheets in which rounding errors and other minor administration inaccuracies often occurred."

"Previously, returning invoices, sorting credits and reissuing invoices caused issues for the subcontractors and our team, and could mean payment delays and the potential to be non-compliant. That's no longer an issue because the automisation and centralisation of processes has left no opportunity for human error."

Improved productivity: In a 12-month period, the finance team has more than doubled their certifications, from around 800 to 2000, yet the team hasn't needed to increase headcount to cope with that volume.

Samantha Robey said, "That's in no small part down to the accuracy of data coming through to the finance team – I can export straight out of Payapps and using APIs, the information flows straight from Payapps into our Microsoft Dynamics ERP system, so errors are minimal. Everything is streamlined now."

Crucial reductions in administrative tasks: Lee Jones revealed Payapps has provided significant time-saving and productivity benefits. He said, "Prior to Payapps, we didn't have any method of tracking how many applications had been received across the business or what our liability was. Now, we know when payments are coming in because we've got a consistent payment schedule that everybody across the business complies with. It helps our teams know what they need to certify and when, so they can manage their time better, focussing on things that will add more value. And crucially, it means we've been able to scale and process larger volumes of applications without adding headcount."

Timely payments and stronger relationships: A streamlined application for payment process means timely and accurate payments to OCU Group's subcontractors and a reputation for being a reliable partner.

As a signatory of the Fair Payment Code (FPC), OCU Group is committed to a set of fair payment principles that includes paying subcontractors on time within the agreed contractual terms.

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Peter Vevers commented, "One of the things that's important to our clients is that we're paying our subcontractors quickly, fairly, and in line with our payment terms. We generally pay all of our subcontractors ahead of our clients paying us, so they can be confident the money is flowing through the supply chain. And if we were audited for fair payments, there would be complete visibility in Payapps, which is particularly important on some of the government-backed schemes."



Imi Hyde, Director at H&E Telecoms, a subcontractor to OCU Group, also highlighted the enhanced transparency offered by the Payapps system. He said, "It's nice to constantly get assurance about where applications are. When I submit an application, I get an email confirming it and then when it's verified or accepted, I get another confirmation email. You don't have to sit and wait, or chase people which can create trust issues."

"Previously, there was greater opportunity for human error and things being missed. With Payapps, you know exactly when you're due payment and what you're due, and all the invoices are on there to be looked at whenever it suits. So I can see what's happening instead of having to call someone, and that really helps with cashflow as I know what's coming in. It helps me plan my weeks better and I don't have to click through files - it's all there in one place. It gives me full transparency. It's so simple and straightforward and if I can use it, anyone can!"

Less risk of disputes and adjudications: With everyone able to see the relevant data and information quickly and simply, Payapps has significantly reduced the risk of misunderstandings between teams and the potential payment disputes that can arise as a result.

Peter Vevers said, "The subcontractors like it because they can see their agreed value every week. If we disagree with a value, they can see which week we disagree with and then they can raise that query with the site manager, and the query's quickly resolved. And if you were to go into Payapps right now and look at any of the historic weeks, anything more than two or three weeks old is fully agreed - either we've subsequently paid the money because they've provided the evidence that may have been missing, or the subcontractor has agreed that their valuation was incorrect and amended on their side."

Chris Corrie added, "Dispute levels have fallen and Payapps really helps us have a cleaner transition from what can be an adversarial position at times."

"I would absolutely recommend Payapps for managing applications for payment. It offers great peace of mind for me, as a leader in the business, to know we've got a clear process, and it upskills the commercial team, helping them to understand legislation and compliance. So the collaboration and governance benefits Payapps brings are exceptional, along with its scalability."

"We chose software that could be implemented quickly, because OCU is a business that moves quickly and it needs to keep pace with our growth. We have big plans for OCU over the next three to five years, and we're hopeful that Payapps will continue with us on that journey."

Transform your application for payment process with Payapps

Ready to streamline your supply chain payments and ensure compliance with ease? Discover how Payapps can empower your team to save time, enhance accuracy, and improve subcontractor relationships.

Book a demo today to see Payapps in action.

About Payapps

Payapps is a cloud-based collaboration tool for the construction industry. It helps contractors and subcontractors simplify and expedite the assessment of applications for payment, including variations and retention. A simpler and faster digital process ensures greater transparency, increased accuracy, improved compliance, reduced financial risk, fewer disputes and fairer outcomes.

Payapps significantly cuts application for payment processing time, helping to meet regulatory requirements. Compliance is improved and made easier with documentation verification integrated with the assessment process. Seamless integration with a wide range of project, construction and financial management software helps provide real-time data on all project payment requests and approvals.

For more information about using Payapps to submit, assess and approve applications for payment, visit www.payapps.com

