

# Automation helps The Tax Institute keep check on internal costs and expenses

Expense and corporate card automation from Concur<sup>®</sup> and American Express<sup>®</sup> helps The Tax Institute control spend and manage costs proactively

## About The Tax Institute

The Tax Institute is Australia's leading professional association and educator in tax providing the best resources, professional development and networks. With over 12,000 members, the Institute's mission is to educate and build expertise in tax and to raise the status of the tax profession. As a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the ongoing professional development of its members, The Tax Institute runs an extensive national program of events and training courses.

“Concur has been very important to our organisation and it has helped us to manage our events in a much more efficient way.”

*Kerryn Divall, General Manager Finance & Administration, The Tax Institute*

## Event Program Core to Institute's Business

The Tax Institute is a 70-year-old business, with a core business model that has evolved gradually over time. Central to its operations is its program of events and training courses across five Australian States – approximately 270 events are run each year from very large conferences and forums to smaller scale seminars and information sessions. As a not-for-profit organisation, effectively managing the costs associated with these events is critical to the Institute's viability. Most of the costs associated with each event were incurred by the individual Institute staff member responsible for managing the event.

“We run events at a lot of different locations, so there are a lot of different costs associated with each event in terms of venues, travel and accommodation,” said Kerryn Divall, General Manager Finance & Administration, The Tax Institute.

Before implementing Concur, The Tax Institute had 30 corporate cards that used to be reconciled by each individual staff member on

## THE TAX INSTITUTE

### Company Name:

The Tax Institute

### Solutions

Concur<sup>®</sup> Expense

Concur<sup>®</sup> Expenselt Pro

American Express<sup>®</sup> Corporate Cards

### Industry

Not-for-profit

### Company Size

80 employees

### Location

Australia

### Why Concur and American Express?

- Greater internal efficiencies allowing resources to be redeployed towards delivering better services to members
- Improved transparency on profitability of national events program
- More positive user experience for monthly expense reporting
- Reduction in errors and more timely reporting of financial data
- Future potential to use platform for business intelligence and further innovation

“Overall, the expense and card automation enabled by Concur and American Express has allowed us to streamline in an already lean environment. We pool the American Express rewards points to pay for flights to bring staff to Sydney for training..”

Kerryn Divall, General Manager Finance & Administration, The Tax Institute

an Excel template. The print-out of the claim, together with the hard copy receipts and the corporate card statement was then sent to the Institute’s accounts payable department for processing. At the same time, the Institute was also processing out-of-pocket expenses from 70-80 staff members.

“Our accounts officer would spend literally days entering that information into the finance system and there was no real control over the dates when things would be submitted, so it was very challenging to make sure that we had all of our records when we needed them,” said Divall.

“It could be up to two months before we had any visibility on the spending that took place and the accruals for any specific event that we ran would take even longer.”

## Automating expense and corporate card processes

In early 2014 The Tax Institute implemented Concur Expense and the Concur Expenselt Pro mobile app for users. At the same time the Institute integrated an automated data feed from its Corporate Card provider, American Express. The Institute now has 40 American Express corporate card users, so their credit card expenses are automatically pre-populated into their individual Concur Expense accounts, together with the electronic receipts from some suppliers. For other receipts (including out-of-pocket expenses), users can take a picture of the hard copy, upload it to Concur and match it to the appropriate expense item using the Expenselt Pro mobile app.

Audit rules have been applied to expense claims, ensuring that every expense requires a receipt or tax invoice. This has resulted in greater policy compliance. If the spending is associated with an

event, each item is assigned to that event’s unique identifier.

“The American Express credit card feed for our expenses happens almost instantly which means when we are running events we can see the expenses and we can determine the profitability in a very timely manner,” said Divall.

“Overall, the expense and card automation enabled by Concur and American Express has allowed us to streamline what was already a lean operational environment.”

“The staff have found using Concur very easy. It’s great because it means that our expense claims are submitted on a timely basis – as soon as they get their credit card statement at the end of the month they’re actually reconciling and submitting their claims before we even ask them. It also allows us to give timely reimbursement to our staff as well, which they appreciate.”

The Institute has also seen productivity gains for its staff through the automation of both its expense and corporate card systems. Divall has calculated that expense reporting and processing took staff on average 14 hours per month. That figure has now dropped to three hours – a time saving of just over 15 working days per person per year.

Also, for the Institute’s finance team, there is no longer a requirement for manual entry of expense data into its financial system. That’s now completed via a regular batch process, saving time and also avoiding any re-keying errors.

“Our accounts payable team is now able to spend more time on training new staff and investigating further opportunities for process improvements,” said Divall.



## Reaping the rewards

As a result of improving operational efficiencies and cost management with Concur and American Express, The Tax Institute has expended the number of cards in use in the organisation from 30 to 40, and also encouraged greater use of the cards for operational costs, particularly in relation to its events.

“American Express is universally accepted which makes it easy to use. Also, we pool the reward points we accrue on all of our individual Cards, which we then convert into travel vouchers to fly key staff to Sydney for training. As a not-for-profit, this is a significant benefit as we can be a lot more economical and responsible with employee travel, without limiting our ability to provide professional development and career progression for our staff,” said Divall.

## Greater visibility and control of costs

Concur and American Express have made spending far more transparent and visible for The Tax Institute. It’s provided timely recognition of expenses in relation to the Institute’s significant annual spend on events. There is also now a far greater level of accuracy on the costs associated with each event, and the opportunity to use Concur’s reporting capabilities to identify any cost savings that can be made, for example, negotiating better corporate rates with suppliers such as airlines and hotels.

“Now that we have Concur in place we have greater visibility on our spend and greater control over those discretionary items as well,” said Divall.

“Concur helps us to manage the timely matching of those expenses against the events so we can work out whether our events have been profitable or not.”

With greater visibility and more accurate costs associated with each event, The Tax Institute can make more informed decisions on how to improve the profitability of similar events in the future.

## Opportunity for further innovation

The Tax Institute is now investigating other ways to improve its financial systems and processes as part of its continuous improvement program. With the implementation of a new CRM tool planned, and also potentially a new backend financial system, the Institute is evaluating Concur Invoice to provide the same benefits of automation that it is enjoying with Concur and American Express.

The Institute also recognises the potential for improving its operations with greater levels of business intelligence and reporting from the data provided by its systems.

“As a not-for-profit, the ability to have greater control over our spend is always good, and the visibility that we get using the Concur reports helps us to manage our costs in a much more proactive way.”

“Concur has been very important to our organisation and it has helped us to manage our events in a much more efficient way. Ultimately, having greater efficiencies with our operations means we are delivering better services for our members,” concluded Divall.

## About Concur

Concur, a part of SAP, is the leading provider of spend management solutions and services in the world, helping companies of all sizes transform the way they manage spend so they can focus on what matters most. Through Concur's open platform, the entire travel and expense ecosystem of customers, suppliers, and developers can access and extend Concur's T&E cloud. Concur's systems adapt to individual employee preferences and scale to meet the needs of companies from small to large.

[Learn more at concur.com.au](https://concur.com.au)

