

Flight Centre Canada soars with AI-powered Expense Audit

FLIGHT CENTRE®

CHALLENGE

- Drastically reduce manual audits
- Streamline approvals
- Uniformly assess policy compliance
- Mitigate spend and compliance risk

SOLUTION

- AI-powered Expense Audit

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- Reduced auditor labor 95% and costs 50% in first 3 months
- Increased efficiency
- Improved policy adherence
- Enhanced spend monitoring and analytics

“Appzen pinpoints exactly what is high risk without having to review 40 receipts on 40 expense lines. Now it’s just 1 or 2 lines that may need a second look.”

INTRODUCTION

Canada’s largest “clicks-and-mortar” travel retailer, Flight Centre Canada has seen an accrual of the benefits of being an AppZen customer since 2017. The company’s philosophy that there is “one best way” to operate pushes the organization to find the most efficient business systems. Their goal is to reduce duplicate work and minimize hours spent on routine procedures. AppZen has helped the company do just that with expense report audits, saving the organization time and money through increased efficiency, and reducing both spend and risk exposure.

THE CHALLENGE

Flight Centre Canada’s greatest challenge was a lack of efficiency. Before implementing AppZen, 40 finance staff worked a combined total of 200 hours per month to conduct expense reviews for the company’s nearly 1800 employees. Accountants were manually auditing every receipt, confirming all employees followed company expense policies. Without streamlined approvals, this time-consuming process introduced errors and led to inconsistencies, as each approver assessed risk and policy compliance differently. At the same time, the finance team was unable to properly conduct risk mitigation techniques such as detailed monitoring because expense auditing took up so much time, especially when added to regular, end-of-month duties.

THE SOLUTION

The company chose AppZen’s Expense Audit solution for its ability to free up auditor hours, reduce human error, and standardize the auditing process. They also recognized that its advanced AI could easily learn new policies and be trained to handle exceptions, improving its performance and increasing its ROI over time. Seamless integration with the company’s existing SAP Concur expense management platform was an additional benefit.

Implementation took only 3 weeks; improvements to the workflow and audit parameters continued for an additional 3 months. Flight Centre Canada was pleasantly surprised at how flexible and configurable the system was. Audit rules were easy to create and customize, allowing the company to quickly optimize their auditing environment. The finance team, initially skeptical that Expense Audit’s AI could be as thorough as an accountant, were reassured by its intelligent decision-making and high level of confidence.



Back in the day 40 accountants spent approximately 5 hours per month auditing expense reports. That is a combined 200 hours auditing these expense reports. Now it's 1 accountant spending maybe 2 hours a month.

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RESULTS & BENEFITS

Efficiency gains were immediate. The labor hours invested in line-by-line checks were reduced by 95%. Expense Audit was simple to navigate and the review process only required a single staff member to carefully check flagged exceptions. Errors were eliminated. Compliance assessment was rigorous and consistent. All audits happened before reimbursement, without slowing the workflow. The time to submit and approve expenses, including email follow-up, was also greatly diminished. Overall, processing costs were immediately cut in half. Their finance team also gained back more time, allowing them to focus on month-end tasks, such as analysis, and providing more strategic business value.

Significant savings on expenditures due to increased compliance were also realized over the first 12 months. Those savings continue today. Expense Audit's enhanced analytics provided spend insights that allowed auditors to hone in on "the usual suspects" who consistently submitted high-risk items. They can now oversee and amend employee spend behavior without the associated costs of monitoring.

In addition, the company gained increased agility in amending expense policies and highlighting specific risks as they occur. For example, during a period where electronic assets were being upgraded, it was able to specifically flag everything under that expense type for that period, allowing for greater scrutiny. And the company found it could effortlessly adjust its expense policies for reasonableness, based on feedback from available reporting and the Appzen Support Team.

Flight Centre's US operation recently rolled out Expense Audit, as well, and that finance team is already beginning to realize the benefits of increased processing speed, efficiency, and savings. True to its philosophy, Flight Centre Canada has found in AppZen the "one best way" to handle expense auditing.