T&E Best Practices Every Manufacturing Company Should Know

certify ✓
by emburse

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Introduction

During an uncertain time in the world, it's more important than ever for manufacturing companies to find new and innovative ways to keep their businesses humming.

One integral piece of that puzzle is ensuring that teams are working efficiently even from afar. As manufacturing employees continue to spend time on the road and stay away from the office — perhaps even becoming more distributed in the long term — automating expense management is a critical step to ensure any company's health.

This interactive e-book is meant to act as a guide for decision makers who are ready to take their financial teams and company to the next level by switching to travel-friendly systems, facilitating seamless cooperation across distributed teams, and becoming a strategic changemaker. And that all starts with automation.

Switch to Paperless Systems That Support Your Field Staff

Imagine a world in which you don't have to wait four weeks for paper receipts, input them painstakingly through a manual system, and then have your employees wait even longer for reimbursement.

According to a study conducted by Certify, 27% of enterprise companies and 44% of mid-market companies are still using manual systems for expense reporting.

But manufacturing companies are beginning to see the vast array of benefits of switching from clunky manual systems to automated, paperless systems.

Switching to digital systems that allow for faster expense reporting will make the process easier for both parties — especially when many manufacturing employees are on the road or working remotely.

27%

of enterprise companies are still using manual systems for expense reporting.
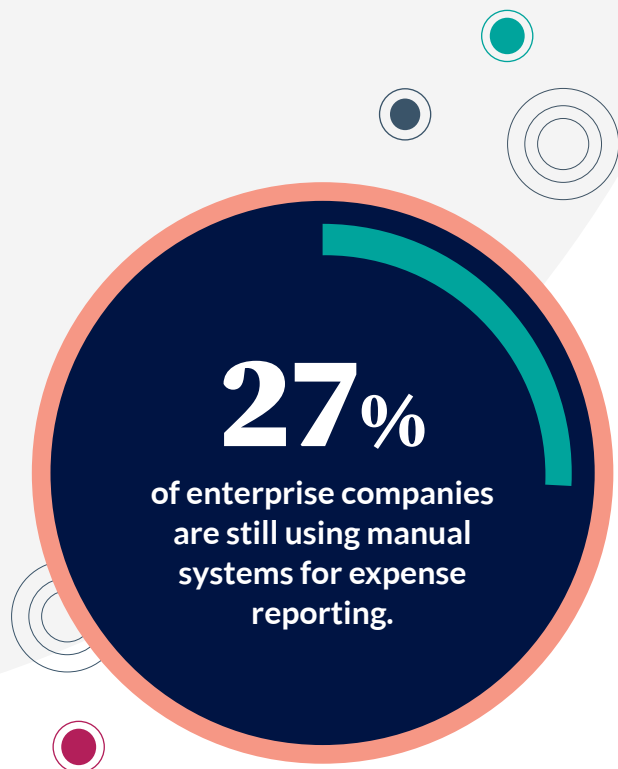
Here are different ways company leaders can integrate field staff friendly systems and relieve headaches for everyone.

Adopt paperless, instant software

Going paperless means faster reports, less processing time, and faster reimbursement time. Both finance teams and employees on the road directly benefit from evolving to a paperless system. Teams like Pharmacists Mutual Companies have even saved nearly $2,000 a year in postage costs by eliminating manual processing.

Paperless systems also better support distributed workforces. Having a cloud-based tool allows finance teams in multiple locations to quickly and easily access company spend. Switching to user-friendly expense reporting software makes everything simpler.

Capture receipts with a smartphone camera

It's easy for employees to misplace a receipt while on the road. Look for expense reporting software that allows for receipt capture with a smartphone camera, so employees can capture receipts immediately and not worry about losing or misplacing them.

Software like Certify's also auto-populates information from the receipt. That means that neither employees nor finance team members will have to add receipt information in line by line, saving everyone time.

Track mileage on Google Maps

Submitting mileage through manual processes is inaccurate at the very best of times. Find expense management software that allows employees to track their mileage through Google Maps.

This feature will allow you to get a more accurate report, and prevents employees from having to manually mark down all the miles they log. Mileage tracking also helps finance teams control fraud, in case employees log extra miles to receive additional money. Having a built-in feature helps eliminate this problem.

Create expense reports on mobile

Manufacturing companies should look for software with a mobile app that enables their employees who are on the go and not always near a computer. Employees who can create quick and easy expense reports on mobile will have less reason to delay their expense reporting.

Take VitaPlus, for example, an agricultural food manufacturer that now reimburses employees 14 days sooner after switching to Certify. Mobile expense reports mean finance teams can process and approve those reports faster, while employees will be happy to have cash back in their pockets sooner than before.

Control spend with virtual cards

Virtual cards allow employees access to a company card without actually needing the physical card itself. Financial administrators can create and fund virtual cards on demand, which are accessible through a mobile app.

This allows finance teams to distribute cards based on the company's T&E policy, allowing better control over spend. That means it's easier for employees to purchase compliant expenses on the company card, and easier for finance teams to issue them.

Streamline purchasing and punch out

Manufacturing organizations have to source supplies from new partners when supply disruptions occur. With manual expense reporting handled in separate systems, there's no way to keep track of new requisitions and partners.

Finance teams can have more control and oversight with a single purchase requisition system. Switching to an automated system also gives employees peace of mind, knowing their purchasing from an approved vendor won't be out of policy compliance later.

Still trying to figure out how travel and expense automation would work for your company?

On the next page, find a handy checklist that explains which type of travel and expense features you can seek out to improve how your finance team operates.

Which T&E Expense Features Does Your Company Need?

Your company may have various reasons to consider using travel and expense software. Which of the below apply to you? Manufacturing companies commonly use and search for these features. Keep this handy as a "shopping list" when looking around for the best solution for your company's needs.

Expense Software

Automated Features

☐ Expense report creation

☐ Receipt data extraction

☐ Reminders to complete expense reports

Reimbursements

☐ Fast turnaround times

☐ Direct deposit and ACH

☐ Paper check payments

☐ Global currencies

☐ Non-employee expense reimbursement

☐ Physical and virtual corporate cards

Spend Visibility and Management

☐ Reporting visibility and data

☐ Custom budgets and spending policies

☐ Instant audits for compliance control

Miscellaneous

☐ Mobile app

☐ Accounting systems integration

Travel Software

Employee Booking

☐ Pre-trip approvals

☐ Compliant, in app booking

☐ Low-fare finder for cost savings

☐ Corporate rates for rail, hotel, car rental

Oversight and Management

☐ Automated policy compliance

☐ Reporting to identify T&E trends

☐ Track and apply unused tickets for savings

☐ Expense management integration

What other features are you looking for?

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Facilitate Seamless Adoption

Some finance teams hesitate to switch from manual processes to automated expense management systems because they're worried about seamless integration and adoption.

This is a valid fear — oftentimes, employees are attached to a process even if it's not the best solution.

Thankfully, your team can choose expense management software that facilitates easy employee adoption. The more user-friendly features that are baked into expense management software, the more likely your employees will be enthusiastic about using them.

This facilitates your team to create efficient processes, even when everyone isn't in the same physical location.

<75%

Nearly half of organizations reported less than a 75% compliance rate with their T&E policy.

Look for a product that has these intuitive features, with little need for employee training or reinforcement.

⊘ Automated approvals, rejections, and policies

When employees submit expenses that are out of policy, this creates a time-consuming and costly challenge that frustrates both finance teams and employees alike. A 2019 survey conducted by Certify found that nearly half of organizations reported less than a 75% compliance rate with their T&E policy.

Look for a solution that bakes expense policies into the software. That way, employees know what the policy is upfront. Automated rules that drive approvals or rejections save the finance team plenty of time, and prevent employees from making the same mistake over and over again before it's caught.

⊘ High-quality implementation and support

Make sure to look for a company that offers first-in-class implementation and support, so that you have an account manager to turn to when questions arise. Companies that offer webinars and onboarding sessions will make for a seamless transition for your team (and the employees who make the switch).

⊘ Expense submission that auto-populates data

The faster the process, the less likely employees will put off the task of submitting expense reports. Technology like Certify's auto-populates data from receipts, meaning employees don't even have to type in most of the information.

This makes adoption more seamless for them, and it saves the finance team time on manually inputted errors.

✓ A user-friendly mobile app

Remote team coordination and mobile-friendly expense software go hand-in-hand. Your team will appreciate switching from manual to automated when they can submit and receive reimbursement even faster through a convenient mobile app.

Make sure the expense report solution you choose has an intuitive and easy-to-use interface, so you won't have to spend much time on training — or convince them about the benefits of using it.

All of these travel-friendly features make it easier for employees in the manufacturing sector to adopt a new expense software solution, and for finance teams to enforce expense policies.

But if you're still struggling to get all employees on board, we have some easy plug-and-play answers below that will help convince them.

Reference Sheet:

Common Objections to New Expense Software Adoption (and Easy Responses)

Rolling out employee adoption of new software can feel a little tricky. But once employees start using the software, they'll come to prefer it over the old way of doing things. In the meanwhile, these are some of the common objections that you can address:

Q **I'm on the road a lot and am rarely around to use my computer on site. Won't this be more complicated to submit receipts for expenses?**

A We've chosen a mobile-friendly app, so you can do everything quickly and easily on your phone. You'll also get your money back even faster than before.

Q **I'm not very tech friendly. Is it okay if I just send you paper receipts instead?**

A The mobile app we're using is very intuitive and quick to figure out. Plus, you won't have to worry about holding onto receipts or losing them if you take a picture right away. This will make it easier all around for everybody.

Q **Does this mean that any of our expense policies are changing?**

A No, not at present. But if they do, it will be even easier for you to know about because the app will help communicate new expense policies and even auto or pre-approve certain expenses.

Q **Can't I still use the old system? It seemed so much easier.**

A It might take a minute to set up, but once you start using it, you'll be happy with how much time it saves you — and how much faster you get reimbursed!

Reduce Spend Inefficiencies to Stay Agile

Manufacturing decision makers should always be looking for opportunities to increase profitability and reduce financial risks.

Switching from manual to automatic expense reporting is key to achieving better spend visibility and reducing inefficiencies. Decision makers who can leverage electronic systems better understand where spend is going and have the opportunity to keep their company financially viable.

Not only that, they have improved visibility to look at industry compliance and T&E policy enforcement.

$40k

SAVED
in duplicate and out-of-policy charges for Saddle Creek Logistics Services
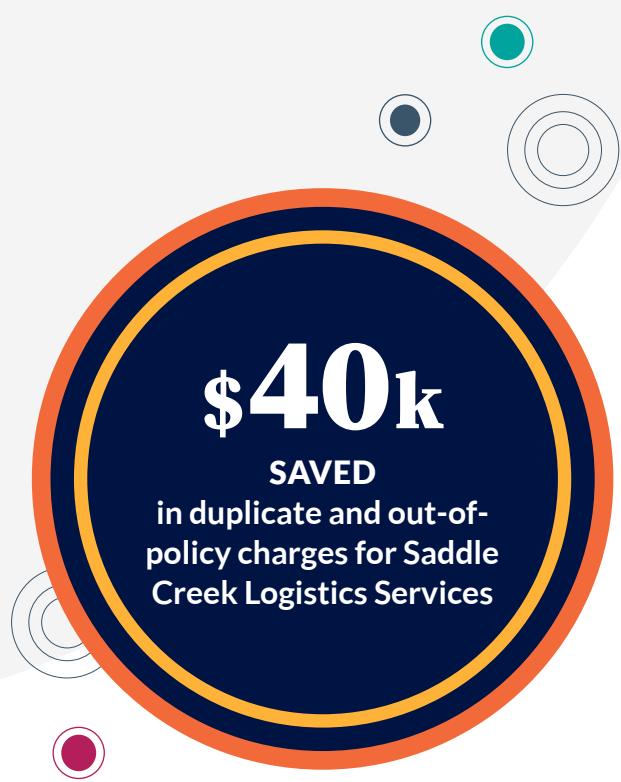
Here are a few ways finance teams can leverage all that new data.

● Conduct audits to confirm expenses and invoices are in policy

High-quality expense management software automatically performs audits on out-of-policy expenses, so you can catch erroneous expenses that your team may not have otherwise had time to.

For example, Certify's client Saddle Creek Logistics Services discovered $40,000 in duplicate and out-of-policy charges after automating.

This freed up the company to create and enforce better expense policies and decide where to channel all of those saved expenses.

● Analyze newly automated and digitized data

According to a 2019 survey conducted by Certify, 29% of organizations manually check each expense to enforce T&E policies. Tracking company expense trends with an analytics dashboard will allow your team to make strategic decisions about where spend should go. It gives you unprecedented visibility into the habits of employees, allowing for a birds eye view that no CFO should go without.

● Suss out common trends where overspending occurs

Once you have a greater view of spending trends in your company, you can easily pinpoint where overspending occurs and course correct accordingly.

For example, you may be surprised to find that your team is spending more on hotel and airfare than the industry standard. As a result, you may decide to implement software that only allows employees to book from a policy-compliant travel app, selecting exclusively from pre-approved vendors and price points. This also allows your company to negotiate better rates with select hotels and services.

✓ Create and integrate new policies that ensure your company's financial future

Switching to an automated system will reduce time spent on manual inputting and allow your team to work on important initiatives. It also gives unprecedented new levels of visibility into spend, and offers the hard data you need to integrate new T&E policies.

With improved capacities across the board, the possibilities are endless. You'll have the opportunity to be seen as a strategic safeguard, someone who's able to look at the big picture and protect the company from unnecessary risks.

Still curious how you can save time and money? The infographic below shows how teams in manufacturing and other sectors have switched from manual to automatic with stunning results.

How Companies Saved by Switching from Manual to Automated Expense Reporting

Going from manual to automated expense management will benefit not only your team, but your entire company in many different ways. Below are just a handful of examples of how Cerity's customers saved time, money, and resources through travel and expense software — freeing them up to make more informed decisions for the company's future.

Time
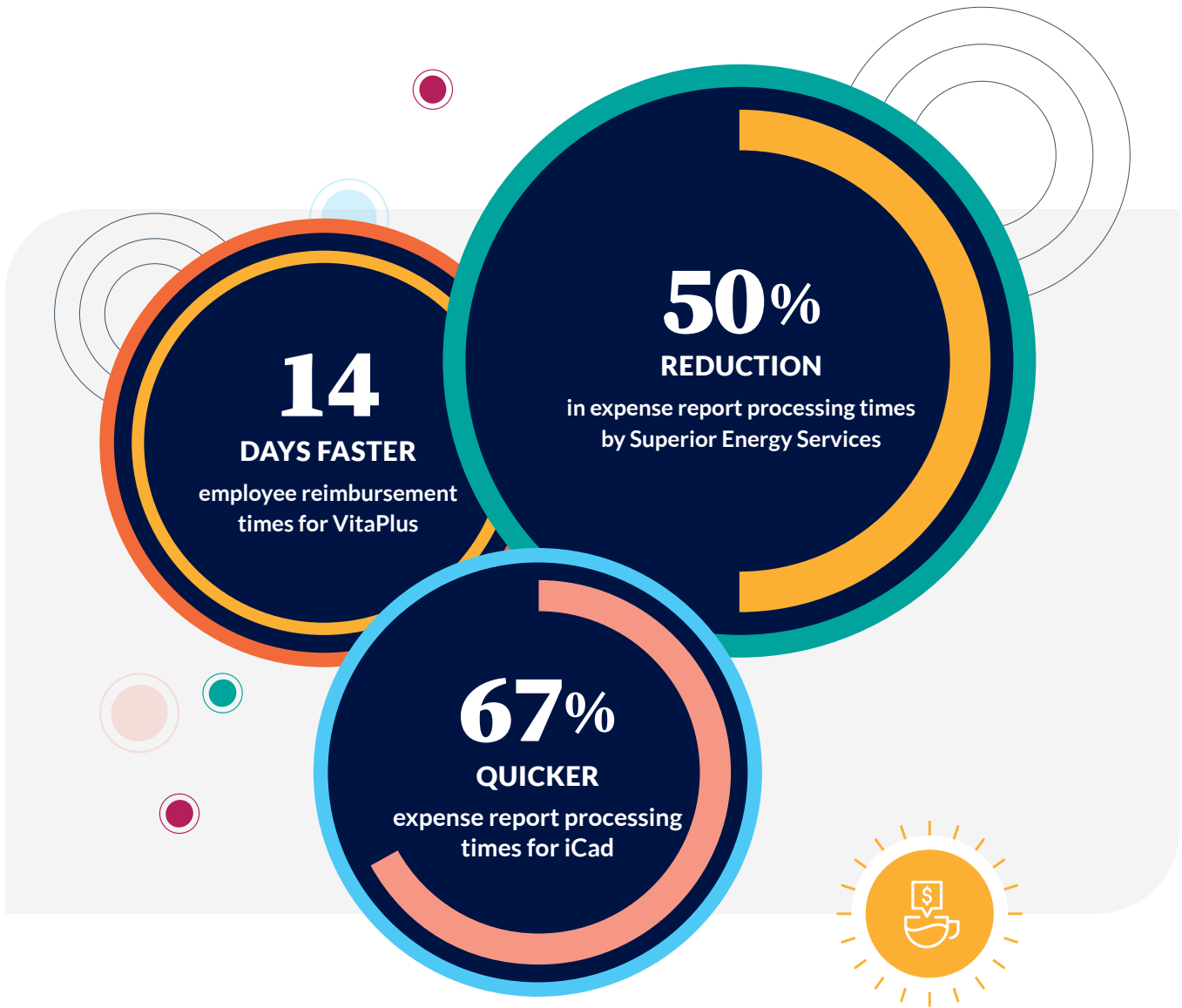
200 HOURS ANNUALLY
saved by iCad's accounting department over manual system

5 to 10 HOURS MONTHLY
saved by Tampico Beverages' finance team since switching

1 DAYS PER WEEK
of AP team admin eliminated by Garmin's team

14
DAYS FASTER
employee reimbursement
times for VitaPlus

50%
REDUCTION
in expense report processing times
by Superior Energy Services

67%
QUICKER
expense report processing
times for iCad

Money

$1944

saved in postage costs by switching to an electronic system

PHARMACISTS MUTUAL COMPANIES

50%

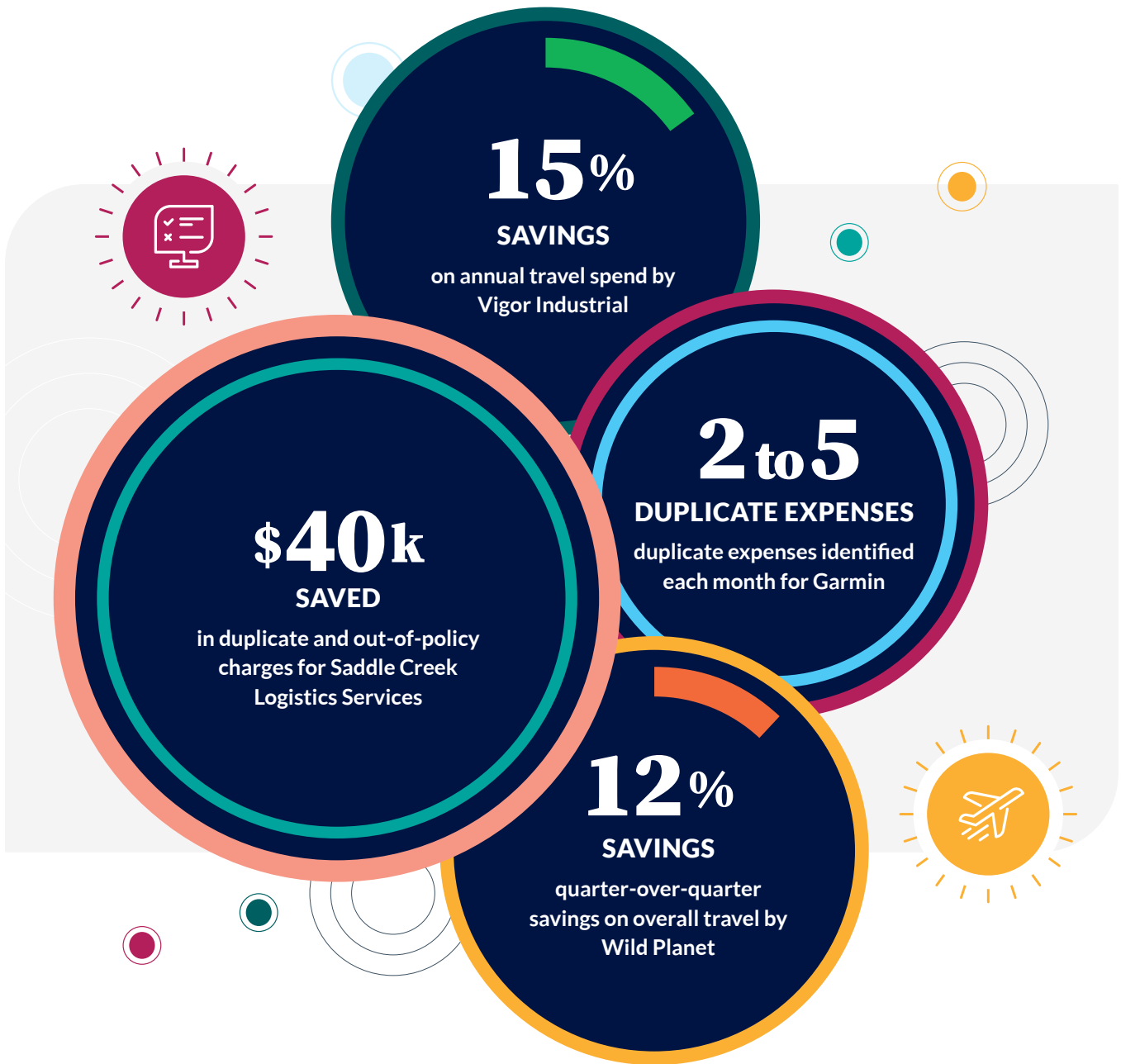**of the annual salary of one full-time employee in savings**

SECURE ENERGY SERVICES

$11,000

in projected savings with faster review times

NOVOGI

15%
SAVINGS
on annual travel spend by
Vigor Industrial

2 to 5
DUPLICATE EXPENSES
duplicate expenses identified
each month for Garmin

$40k
SAVED
in duplicate and out-of-policy
charges for Saddle Creek
Logistics Services

12%
SAVINGS
quarter-over-quarter
savings on overall travel by
Wild Planet

Interested in automating your T&E processes?

We'd love to talk.

Certify is a part of Emburse, a global leader in expense management and AP automation solutions. We are trusted by more than 4,500,000 users in over 120 countries, with 14,000 customers.

Emburse enables organizations to make faster, smarter decisions, empower business travelers to recapture lost nights doing expense management, and help make users' lives better. You can learn more information about us at certify.com.

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