



The Restaurant AP Automation Benchmark Report

Why This Report Exists

For restaurant operators operating with tight margins, there's not much room for error. So when prime costs climb past 65-70% of revenue, even small price discrepancies can take a toll on profitability. A broadliner invoice with a mispriced case of chicken, or a supplier slowly increasing prices across dozens of SKUs, can widen the gap between expected and actual food costs, leaving operators to guess whether waste, theft, or billing errors are to blame.

Most restaurant operators can sense when something's amiss. But when food cost percentages look higher than expected, it can be difficult to determine whether it's due to a recipe issue, a vendor billing error, or a coding mistake. This is especially true for lean AP teams that simply don't have time for in-depth investigations. As a result, problems often go unresolved, and they continue to impact the bottom line.

Each quarter, Ottimate processes thousands of invoices for our restaurant customers. We've compiled that data into a snapshot to help restaurant operators quantify what's really happening. It provides benchmarks based on actual restaurant AP data rather than industry estimates or survey responses.

The first edition of the Restaurant AP Automation Benchmark Report focuses on duplicate detection, fraud exposure, invoice discrepancies, payment errors, invoice lifecycle time, and AP labor savings. Twice a year, we'll track how these numbers evolve and what's driving the changes so restaurant operators can see how they stack up and where there are opportunities to improve performance.

Duplicate Detection

Restaurants remain the **highest-volume duplicate detection** segment across our entire customer base. That alone makes the case: at this volume, manually catching duplicate invoices isn't a realistic line of defense. **Automated detection** is doing work no AP team could do by hand.

Average saved per duplicate invoice **in 2025**

\$773

In the first half **of 2026**

\$938

Flagged Before the Check Went Out

More than half of accounts had an **invoice flagged as risky** in the first six months of 2026, up from 34.8% across all of 2025. A bad invoice rarely looks bad on its own. It looks wrong **next to the last four**, and that's a comparison automated review makes on every invoice, every time, without anyone needing to remember what produce cost three weeks ago. As that comparison catches more, exposure that used to go unnoticed starts showing up before it becomes a loss.

invoices flagged as risky **in 2025**

34.8%

In the first half **of 2026**

51%

The Price That Quietly Stopped Being the Price

Six months into 2026, \$256.7M in credits has already been uncovered, 61% of what all of 2025 turned up. **Overcharges rarely look like overcharges:** a case cost that moved eleven cents in March and never moved back or a promotional rate that quietly expired. What makes them findable is the memory of what that item cost last month and what the contract said it should cost, which is the part automation handles, and a kitchen manager approving invoices before the dinner rush reasonably cannot.

Uncovered credits
in all of 2025

\$420.7M

In the first half of 2026

\$256.7M

The Losses You Can't Claw Back

Payment errors are costly and difficult to recover from once funds have left the account. Halfway through the year, this pace is already on track to **approach last year's full total by year-end.**

Manual payment reviews miss what a consistent, automated check catches every time, which is exactly why a **final validation layer** before disbursement matters.

Payments with errors
in all of 2025

14,250

in first half of 2026

6,026

Invoice Lifecycle Time

Invoice lifecycle time **dropped** from 11 days to 5.1 days in 2025, then fell further to **2.2 days** in the first half of 2026. That's not an early win leveling off. It's **platform maturity**: processing speed keeps climbing while invoice volume climbs right along with it. A shorter lifecycle means fewer invoices sitting unresolved at month-end, fewer surprises in the aging report, and a close that doesn't hinge on someone racing to clear a backlog before the books shut.

Average invoice lifecycle time **in 2025**

11 days

In the first half **of 2026**

2.2 days

AP Labor Savings

Time saved per invoice climbed from 5.9 days to 8.8 days year over year, even as invoice volume per account rose 16 percent. **Faster processing and rising volume** are compounding each other. What that means in practice: the original labor-savings estimate now understates what's actually being realized. As invoice counts grow, the time saved isn't staying flat, **it's growing with it.**

Saved in AP labor costs **in all of 2025**

5.9 days

in first half **of 2026**

8.8 days



About This Report

The Restaurant AP Automation Benchmark Report: Summer 2026 Edition is published by Ottimate using aggregated, anonymized data from our restaurant customer base. All benchmarks reflect real invoice processing data across independent restaurants and multi-unit restaurant groups. This is the first edition; future editions will track trends and flag what's driving the changes.

Next edition: Winter 2026

Stop Letting AP Eat Your Profits

Explore how Ottimate catches vendor overcharges and cuts invoice lifecycle time, without pulling managers off the floor.



Explore Ottimate for Restaurants