

OPTIMIZING WORKING CAPITAL –

Inside NielsenIQ's Approach to Cash Flow Excellence



Imagine having instant, clear visibility into customer payment behavior, allowing your team to adapt its cash collection strategies, whether for year-end pressure or routine schedules.

When you have high levels of visibility, you not only can improve your working capital, but you can also make your finance operations a much nicer place to work. With the right culture and technology, it's easier to keep employees engaged and focused on improving the business and adding value.

This report is packed with actionable takeaways for finance leaders looking to optimize collections, boost working capital and improve cash flow visibility. Read on to discover how to:



- **Standardize and enhance customer communication:** Learn how NielsenIQ uses Sidetrade to unify client outreach, leading to a more consistent and effective collections process, and improved customer satisfaction.
- **Gain real-time visibility into payment patterns:** Learn how to leverage insights, so you can anticipate and act on client payment behaviors without navigating information across ERPs or other systems.
- **Improve cash flow forecasting and risk management:** Learn how to reduce risk and accelerate the Order-to-Cash cycle.
- **Elevate the human element in finance** and make your department a convivial place to come to work.
- **Reduce Days Sales Outstanding (DSO)** learn how NIQ achieved this and unlocked working capital.

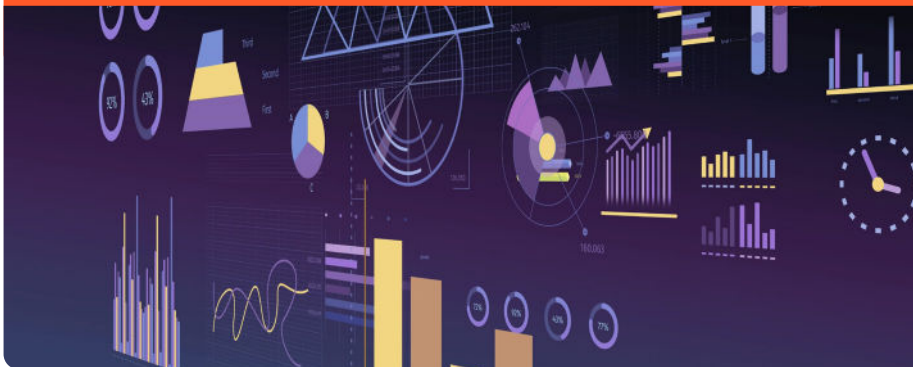


We explored this case study in a webinar. Watch the full webinar here.

NielsenIQ, or **NIQ**, is a global market research company with about 30,000 employees, operating in more than 100 countries.

NIQ's Global Business Services (GBS)

NIQ's GBS supports finance functions globally with a team of 700 full-time employees. The primary hub is located in Pune, India, with several hubs around the world to meet regional language and operational requirements. In 2022 NIQ transitioned from an outsourced model to a captive Global Business Services (GBS) model to better align with the needs of its global organization. In 2023, NIQ acquired GfK, and, while SAP supports both organizations as the predominant ERP, several smaller entities operate on platforms like Navision and QuickBooks. NIQ's billing team creates over 300,000 invoices a year.



CASE STUDY:

Transforming Cash Collection and Client Engagement at NielsenIQ with Sidetrade

NIQ

Challenges Before Automation

NIQ GBS had just transitioned its operations from BPO to captive, and just acquired GfK. During the “aftermath,” it became apparent that the GBS team needed to address some issues in collections and across receivables. Some of the problems included:

- **Inconsistent Processes Across Geographies:** Unstructured credit control and dunning practices led to inefficiencies and a fragmented client experience. Variations in processes sometimes created the impression among their clients of organizational disarray.
- **Manual Processes and Limited Visibility:** Reliance on spreadsheets hindered tracking and analysis of disputes, with sporadic reporting causing disconnects.
- **Distrust and misalignment:** Commercial Teams raised concern regarding how finance engaged with their clients as they believed customer data was inaccurate and out of date.
- **Cash Flow Constraints:** Crucially, disparate collection management processes tied up working capital.

Objectives for Transformation:

NIQ set clear goals to address these challenges:

1. Centralize and standardize workflows for credit control.
2. Gain real-time visibility into client payment behaviors.
3. Leverage technology for automation and consistency.
4. Develop a system adaptable to evolving business needs.
5. Foster transparency by sharing targets and results across the organization.

THE SOLUTION:

Automating and Partnering with Sidetrade

NIQ selected Sidetrade, an AI-powered platform, which helped them with:

- **Standardizing Workflows:** Technology helped them develop a consistent approach to client engagement and dispute resolution.
- **Providing AI-Powered Insights:** Sidetrade offered advanced analytics on payment behaviors, mining large amounts of transactional data to report

benchmarks on how customer payment behavior with NIQ compared to how they paid other commercial partners.

- **Real-Time Visibility:** Role-specific dashboards gave the finance team visibility into cash flow globally in real time.
- **Proactive Client Categorization:** Using a Red-Amber-Green system, NIQ designed workflows to address late payments effectively.
- **Adapting Processes to Meet the Needs of the Client:** With improved processes in place, and accurate information about how clients actually pay, NIQ could tailor their approach to ensure more on-time payments.

“ A client will behave according to your processes. So you need to understand what their payment behavior is and how to influence and change that. But you also need to be able to develop workflows that have the flexibility for you to change that as businesses morph. ”

Sue Bracken Global Finance Director **NielsenIQ**



- **Customizable Dispute Management:** Adaptable tools supported rapid responses to external events like COVID-19.

“One of the times that this was incredibly valuable to us as an organization was as COVID struck. It enabled me to, within moments, be able to create a dispute type with COVID associated when our clients were telling us that they couldn't pay us because of something related to COVID. That enabled us to get ahead and be able to interact and be able to articulate succinctly, to all of the relevant stakeholders, what the impact was.”



Sue Bracken
Global Finance Director **NielsenIQ**

Implementation and Results

NIQ's adoption of Sidetrade delivered significant improvements:

- **Streamlined Operations:** Local teams embraced the platform to prioritize tasks and enhance client engagement.
- **Data-Driven Decisions:** Leading analytics empowered teams to focus on high-risk customers and proactively address issues.
- **Stronger Client Relationships:** Transparent communication fostered trust with clients and internal stakeholders.
- **Global Process Standardization:** A common approach across all entities meant global customers were experiencing a unified professional service.
- **Enhanced Cash Flow:** Automation and AI-driven recommendations unlocked access to cash.



Prioritizing People in the GBS Transformation Journey:

“Technology isn’t a silver bullet. It’s important, but it only works if we keep the human in the loop and pay attention to change management.”

Chris Gunning Global Enablement Lead, FinOps
NielsenIQ

How Technology can Transform Working Culture:

Operational efficiency is often the main goal for most finance operations, achieved by centralizing processes, automating repetitive tasks, and scaling operations. While these efforts deliver measurable benefits, delivering greater value requires addressing the human element of finance operations as well.

Automation has transformed NIQ’s finance operations and improved business outcomes while fostering an engaging and fulfilling workplace culture. A notable result of these efforts has been a significant reduction in employee attrition and improved employee engagement.

NIQ’s experience highlights key trends for GBS leaders to embrace:

Employee experience is crucial. As organizations drive transformation in their GBS and finance operations, the human element becomes increasingly crucial. While traditional goals such as efficiency, cost reduction, and automation remain important, modern GBS leaders must also focus equally on creating outstanding experiences for employees and customers:

“We want to create an environment where employees are excited to come to work, where they’re engaged and empowered by the tools and technologies we provide.”

Chris Gunning Global Enablement Lead, FinOps
NielsenIQ



Capabilities as a Service: Moving beyond transactional finance operations, leading organizations are establishing specialized enablement teams. These teams, composed of data scientists, process improvement experts, and engineers, focus on leveraging technology to derive deeper insights and drive continuous improvement.

“We’re seeing a shift from transactional finance operations to capabilities as a service, where niche skills and continuous improvement are driving real value.”

Chris Gunning Global Enablement Lead, FinOps
NielsenIQ

End-to-End Process Ownership: Global Process Owners (GPOs) play a pivotal role in ensuring seamless operations from start to finish. At NIQ, GPOs collaborate with sales, commercial teams, and controllers to optimize processes such as order-to-cash. Their ability to identify transformative tools, like Sidetrade, has been instrumental in achieving process standardization and enhancing efficiency.

“The power of a GPO lies in their ability to work end-to-end, from commercial teams upstream to controllers downstream, ensuring seamless process ownership and alignment.”

Chris Gunning Global Enablement Lead, FinOps
NielsenIQ

Change Management: Successful technology implementation requires more than advanced tools. NIQ has emphasized the importance of change management, addressing resistance and guiding stakeholders through the transformation. By building trust and fostering collaboration, the organization has ensured smooth adoption of new processes and technologies.

“70% of all technology implementations fail because of a lack of focus on change management—it’s a fine art that’s essential for success.”

Chris Gunning Global Enablement Lead, FinOps
NielsenIQ



AT A GLANCE –

What works, and what doesn't, in complex Global Business Services

What doesn't work	What worked at NIQ
Disparate processes throughout a complex organization.	Process owners driving standardization globally.
Out-of-date or inaccurate data leading to poor communication with commercial partners.	Automation of data collection and input from Service Delivery leads — who provide contextual insights — enhance the organization's ability to monitor and improve both global and regional performance effectively.
Introducing technology by mandate, forcing people to adopt tech without additional context.	Focusing on the WHY – why you are introducing this technology. The goal was to improve working capital and to improve control.
Using the same workflow and process for all customers.	Standardized processes improve efficiency and give teams capacity to adapt workflows to reflect client requirements.
Pushing legacy technology to its limit.	Investing in advanced technology and AI-powered tools to operate at scale and optimize your resources.

Delivering Tangible Business Outcomes

The implementation of Sidetrade at NIQ has delivered measurable results, including:

- Reduced Days Sales Outstanding (DSO).
- Enhanced working capital management, freeing up resources for strategic investments.
- Standardized and centralized operations, reducing complexity.
- Upskilled teams that focus on problem-solving and customer interaction, aligning with NIQ's principle of being “customer obsessed.”

Final Takeaways

NIQ's journey demonstrates that technology is a powerful enabler, but the true key to GBS transformation lies in prioritizing people and experience. By fostering a culture of innovation, investing in talent, and maintaining a relentless focus on delivering value, organizations can unlock the full potential of their GBS operations.

“Ignore experience at your peril. Amazing onboarding, service delivery, and knowledge management are critical for setting your GBS apart.”

Chris Gunning Global Enablement Lead, FinOps
NielsenIQ



Listen to the full webinar here.

Sue Bracken is the Global Finance Director at NielsenIQ. She has led finance and shared services teams at multinational organizations including Northgate Public Services, Randstad and TUI.

View Sue's profile on LinkedIn.

Chris Gunning is the Global Enablement Lead, Global Finance Operations at NielsenIQ. He has held finance and shared services leadership positions at Global organizations including Heineken, and Unisys.

View Chris' profile on LinkedIn.

About sharedserviceslink

sharedserviceslink is the world's largest community for finance shared services professionals. Forty thousand Friends have full access to our current and archived webinars, e-books, guides, white papers, reports and roundtables. Each year, twenty technology providers keen to win the finance shared services market, partner with sharedserviceslink to foster connections to expand their adoption.

For more content like this, please visit www.sharedserviceslink.com and remember to sign up as a Friend.

About SideTrade

Sidetrade (Euronext Growth: ALBFR.PA) provides a SaaS platform designed to revolutionize how cash flow is secured and accelerated. Leveraging its next-generation AI, nicknamed Aimie, Sidetrade analyzes \$7.2 trillion worth of B2B payment transactions daily in its Cloud, thereby anticipating customer payment behavior and the attrition risk of more than 40 million buyers worldwide. Aimie recommends the best operational strategies, dematerializes and intelligently automates Order-to-Cash processes to enhance productivity, results and working capital across organizations. Sidetrade has a global reach, with 400+ talented employees based in Europe, the United States and Canada, serving global businesses in more than 85 countries. Amongst them: AGFA, Bidcorp, BMW Financial Services, Bunzl, DXC, Engie, Inmarsat, KPMG, Lafarge, Manpower, Morningstar, Page, Randstad, Safran, Saint-Gobain, Securitas, Siemens, UGI, Veolia. Sidetrade is a participant of the United Nations Global Compact, adhering to its principles-based approach to responsible business.

For more information, visit us at www.sidetrade.com and follow us on **LinkedIn** at **@Sidetrade**.



Meet Aimie,
Sidetrade's
order-to-cash
AI expert