Effective Adoption of Robotic Process Automation in the Enterprise.

An Infosys Consulting Perspective
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INTRODUCTION

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is widely sought after by several industries due to the perceived cost and effort benefits. The adoption of RPA, at scale, is not without its challenges and organizations have seen varying levels of success with it. We believe that a common cause is an incorrect understanding of its setup and application.

In this point-of-view, we share our understanding of the possible roles and benefits of RPA by highlighting routine use-cases. We outline the common pitfalls faced by companies during implementation and discuss the success of a Proof of Concept to overcome these challenges. We also examine how to maximize the business impact of RPA.

Finally, we discuss how an Australian utility provider saw a significant improvement in its rate of processing, cycle time and total cost of ownership with the help of RPA, delivered by Infosys Consulting.
Enterprises across the world have been attracted to Robotic Process Automation (RPA) on the promise of the benefits it can deliver. These span across multiple areas, including cost, customer experience, quality, and productivity, helping to solve several common operational pain points that affect enterprises. Such benefits are clear indications of the enterprise successfully introducing and effectively scaling RPA across the organization. While some organizations can boast of significant success, many remain deflated with results falling well short of expectations.

Regardless, the benefits offered by effective RPA are too significant for the enterprise to ignore.

**Figure 1. RPA Benefits**

- **Reduced operational costs**: Bots cost ~20% of the cost of an onshore employee, and ~33% cost of an offshore employee.
- **Reduced payback period**: Organizations typically realize full payback in less than 12 months.
- **Improved agility**: Bots can be deployed on demand to manage seasonal or one-off volume changes.
- **Enhanced customer experience**: Bots provide on average 20% FTE capacity, enabling the human workforce to refocus on improving customer service.
- **Increased ROI relative to other system implementations**: Top performers earned nearly 4X on their RPA investment.
- **Improved productivity**: Bots can process higher volumes with reduced cycle times, compared to humans.
- **Improved reliability**: Bots can work 24/7 without interruption or supervision.
- **Improved quality**: Bots complete routine processes in a consistent manner, reducing reworks and improving compliance.
Understanding the Role of RPA.

A common pitfall we encounter when working with clients regardless of industry, is the fundamental misperception of the role of RPA. Whether attributed to over-zealous sales folk or CxOs wanting to demonstrate innovation and thought leadership, the flawed expectations at the start yield disappointing results throughout the journey.

Far too many enterprises commence their RPA journey by treating it as another form of ‘software development’. Unlike traditional ‘software development’, RPA is ‘software configuration’ of virtual robots to mimic the actions of human users in executing business processes.

Common use-cases include:

- Extracting structured data through database queries based on a series of input data. The output can be captured in a report or separate file.
- Completing forms in an interactive manner by completing fields, selecting options from drop-down lists, and clicking buttons.
- Payment of invoices based on the validation of defined rules.
- Sending emails that are pre-formatted based on a template e.g. informing users of reports being ready.
- Performing calculations on extracted data and performing a specific activity based on the resultant value.
- Performing quality assurance audits by checking the validity of data on forms or reports.
Through practical experience, we have witnessed RPA being most effective in executing:

- Repetitive, rule-based business processes
- Processes with structured and standardized inputs
- High volume processes, with few exceptions that fall outside the standard scenarios or ‘happy path’
- Stable processes, that are unlikely to be impacted by process and application changes in the future.
- Processes that require interaction with multiple data sources and/or applications.
- Lean, optimized processes.
- Interacting with the application(s) UI layer, mimicking actions taken by a human user. Often considered as the most common use of RPA, examples include the rekeying of data between different systems.
- Augmenting the human workforce with a virtual workforce. The introduction of a virtual employee, available 24x7, that can undertake the activities described above thereby freeing up capacity within teams.

We have also witnessed RPA being less effective when organizations see it as:

- Robots replicating human cognitive functions – RPA cannot exhibit human functions such as empathy and judgment outside of the defined business rules
- Robots replacing the human workforce – on the contrary, organizations that have successfully scaled RPA have utilized the technology to augment the human workforce with a digital workforce, elevating the potential and productivity of the human workforce.
- Intrusive technology that can make underlying changes to applications – this misconception tends to drive a lack of support from technology stakeholders that can stop an RPA program from ever getting off the ground.
- The silver bullet for fixing inefficient or broken processes

By ensuring that the respective stakeholders are aligned in their expectations, organizations are better placed to gain support in this technology’s adoption and leverage its capabilities to deliver sustainable success.
Overcoming Common Pitfalls.

The journey to effective adoption is littered with examples where organizations have missed the mark. Our analysis of these cases highlights a set of 4 common pitfalls. Fortunately, there are proven methods to overcome these challenges.

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<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Why is it important?</th>
<th>Proven methods for success</th>
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| Poor choice of process candidates for automation | Process complexity, instability or incorrect process selection can impact complexity of RPA design, delay implementation and realisation of business benefit, ultimately increasing cost and business disruption. | • Develop a robust process selection framework and demand capability.  
• Simplify, standardize and optimize processes prior to automation.  
• Assess impacts of process and system changes upfront.  
• Develop a prioritized and sustainable demand pipeline. |
| Technology groups e.g. ICT have not bought into the journey | Successful RPA adoption is near impossible without an engaged IT function, to support the development, governance and operations of the digital workforce. IT may struggle to prioritize RPA amongst other enterprise transformations, treat it like ‘just another piece of software’ or have concerns on potential impact of this emerging technology on their existing ecosystem. | • Adopt the proven “Business led, IT governed” recipe for success, through a Centre of Excellence (CoE).  
• Engage IT from the start of the RPA journey, including co-creation of governance frameworks and processes with the business, and regular face time with Executive sponsors.  
• Enlist ‘RPA Champions’ across IT to lead the navigation of technical challenges across the organization. |
| **The required technical skills are non-existent** | Given the evolving nature of RPA, the lack of technical leadership and expertise can lead to RPA solution of sub-standard quality with limited reusability; this creates technical debt, limits scalability, increases implementation lag and reduces business confidence. | • Engage an experienced implementation partner to commence.  
• Develop an RPA Design Authority within the CoE to govern quality, upskill developers and champion continuous improvement.  
• Invest in building internal capability for process selection, development and maintenance. |
| **Organization change management is overlooked** | RPA is an initial stage of the automation continuum and requires effective change management to execute transformation; change aversion, limited engagement with the vision and strategy and fear of impacts to jobs are some of the common challenges organizations can expect. | • Develop a transparent communication strategy that places people at the heart of the organization’s digital transformation.  
• Implement a top-down engagement approach to enable stakeholders across the organization to buy-into the vision.  
• Implement change management and training for the humans who will be working in the new augmented workforce.  
• Showcase, early and often, the use cases and benefits of RPA to audiences across the enterprise. |
Using a Proof of Concept to Setup Success.

In light of these challenges, we strongly advocate the use of a ‘Proof of Concept’ (PoC) as the viable next step in the journey to introduce, and scale RPA in the enterprise. By its very nature, the PoC is designed to ignite the ‘desirability’ of the technology as stakeholder groups begin to realize the potential of the technology.

Effective PoCs are quick to expose technical limitations and to dispel assumptions that business and technology stakeholders may have with regards to the technology and process feasibility of the technology. A common misunderstanding is that PoCs are long running, however our experience has shown that a refined and targeted 4-week PoC can produce demonstrable outcomes.

**Figure 2: Proof of Concept for RPA Implementation**
Maximize the Business Impact of Automation.

These outcomes from a structured PoC are instrumental in forming the foundation of the RPA journey. The next steps involve business and IT stakeholders co-creating a detailed automation strategy and roadmap, with executive sponsorship, and mobilizing a Centre of Excellence to execute delivery and governance.

From our experience, successful enterprises continue to learn and evolve their approach, as they move towards automation to maximize the impact and benefits to the enterprise.

Figure 3: Key outcomes of PoC
# IMPLEMENTING AND SCALING RPA FOR AN AUSTRALIAN UTILITY PROVIDER.

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<tr>
<th>Why?</th>
<th>Project summary and objectives.</th>
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<td>▪ As a regulated entity, the client had market obligations to meet including its commitment to lower energy prices and its cost of operation</td>
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<td>▪ Several manual interventions underpinned significant business processes resulting in higher costs, long cycle times and errors and rework</td>
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<td>▪ Our client was aware of the potential benefit of RPA and sought to evaluate its application within their environment</td>
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<td>▪ The client identified a set of finance and accounting processes to form the scope of an initial pilot to demonstrate the feasibility and viability of RPA</td>
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<td>▪ Key measures of success included accuracy of processing, cycle time and total cost of ownership</td>
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### How?

**Our role.**

- Established the automation capability that spanned the organization delivering RPA services for consumption by business and ICT groups with a clear charter, operating cadence and catalogue of services
- Development of testing, business continuity and disaster recovery strategies for use by the solution support team
- Solution highlights:
  - Demonstrated the desirability of the solution by showcasing the benefit of RPA to the business
  - Identified and addressed technical feasibility issues through the pilot process
  - Conducted detailed financial viability to scale the solution
  - Gained confidence and support of a wide range of stakeholders
  - Collaborated in the development of the RPA roadmap for the roll out across the organization.

### Result:

**Value delivered.**

- Created a scalable, enterprise-grade platform and support services model for future automation programs, thereby increasing the return on investment and accelerating payback for the RPA platform
- Increased efficiency of business team and ICT operations team by eliminating daily bot exceptions and stability issues.
- Increased daily throughput of RPA bots which resulted in increased number of transactions being successfully handled by the bots
- Freed-up capacity of the ICT support team for making further functional enhancements and developing new RPA bots
- Delivered 12 bots in production
- Improved processing cycle time by 88%.
- Processing exceptions and fallout reduced to <1%
CONCLUSION

The benefits of Robotic Process Automation are tangible, significant and attainable, provided the enterprise approaches its adoption with realistic expectations based on the right fit of the technology. More organizations stumble on the path to effective automation and these examples have clearly shown a set of avoidable pitfalls. We strongly believe that the best approach is to commence a targeted 4-week proof of concept to engage stakeholders, ignite desirability of the potential of the platform and test technical feasibility.
MEET THE EXPERTS ... 

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Sriram joined Infosys Consulting in September 2019, and has since worked on digital and analytics projects across major telecom and banking clients. He has 8 years of experience across insurance and financial services, across analytics, operations and transformation. Sriram managed the delivery of Robotic Process Automation across the wealth division of a large Australian bank, and was a key player in mobilising and uplifting the robotics and automation capability across this large and complex organisation. As an accredited Blue Prism Robotic Operating Model Architect, he is passionate about establishing scalable and sustainable automation capabilities to enable clients to experience the benefits of a digital workforce.

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