

Overcoming **the key challenges**
to deploying automated
processes at scale and releasing
the true ROI potential



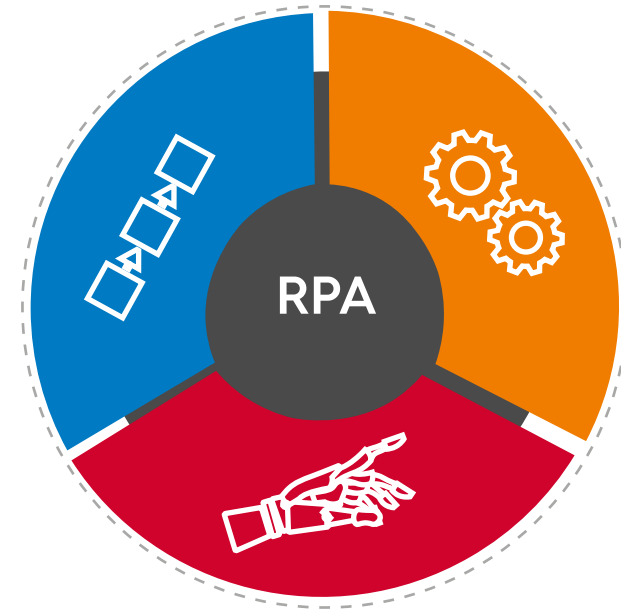
The world is how we shape it

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Introduction

Many clients embarking on their Robotic Process Automation (RPA) journey can often falter when trying to scale across their organisation. With the best of intentions, many robotic ventures start by departments/ business unit managers looking to improve the efficiency of operations in their area of responsibility, with specialist organisations tending to assist in delivering RPA proof of concepts and automating the most obviously suitable tactical processes on behalf of clients to help drive initial ROI.

Transitioning the automation journey across wider business units in order to realise the true benefits of automation then becomes a real challenge as the RPA strategy is typically driven at a departmental level in the organisation (a bottom - up approach). With little to no executive level sponsorship or buy-in from the offset, the ability to scale quickly stumbles due to a lack of consideration to wider company automation strategy.



Additionally, many business processes are not confined to a single department or business unit. There may be linked upstream and/or downstream processes that fall outside the responsibility of the initiating department or business unit. If these processes are not further investigated (regardless of whether they are within the initial scope of automation), then opportunities to easily incorporate into the automation suite at a later date (or even eliminate them) can be overlooked. This has been noted particularly across the Banking and Financial Services sectors where many firms of late have been choosing to create sub-divisions, or even 'digital entities', that operate under their own localised platforms. Integration with wider group, products, services and process has often been an after-thought and a set-back to delivery and competitive market edge.

To properly scale robotics and realise the return on investment, automation strategies need to be owned by the executive team and driven across all business units within the organisation. This executive sponsorship should be supported by robust business cases highlighting exactly how robotic investments will be realised and the benefits to the business and end user. Core robotic functions, commonly known as Automation Centres of Excellence, should be set up to support this strategy and help deliver self-sufficiency. This will help to ensure the best use of licensing and infrastructure investments, instil appropriate governance across automation projects and provide the capability to monitor and support live running robotic processes.

Taking the time to establish and solidify the foundation of automation enables an organisation to tackle more challenging automation processes by adopting business transformation programmes, re-engineering processes so they are more suitable for automation, and digitising data coming into the organisation. The new breed of intelligent automation tooling, provided by the market leading vendors, can be adopted to further help unlock automation potential. This includes Process Mining, Automated Analytics and the structuring of unstructured data, rife within most organisations, through document ingestion using OCR and ML technologies.

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When adopting this ‘Executive led top-down’ approach, robotics can be scaled with real success and organisations can benefit from significant process efficiencies which in turn helps them become more competitive in their market sector.

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Recognising the signs that your RPA investments are not going to deliver business value

These days it's rare that business leaders do not know or understand the potential that RPA technologies can bring to their organisation in terms of time efficiency, process improvement and improved employees productivity.

Many organisations have already started to deploy automation across core business processes, however, in many cases, once the RPA business case has been approved, it is left to individual teams within the business to implement the programme. It is only 12-24 months later, when reviewing the supporting business cases, that organisations discover many of their automation investments haven't delivered the cost or productivity savings they were promised.

Sopra Steria's experience in delivering automation solutions tells us there are some early warning signs that technology and business teams should look for in terms of whether an RPA investment is going to deliver the returns as intended:

1

The executive team has lost its clear vision for RPA programmes of work and business cases are not realised

Once the initial fanfare of introducing Automation technologies into the organisation has subsided and automation gains have been proven, via pilot or early adoption executives tend to lose interest in their RPA programmes and view such initiatives as Business As Usual.

Executives are busy people, but failing to focus on what they want to achieve with their RPA investments can leave these investments in danger of being wasted and any significant efficiency gains will remain unfulfilled.

Leaders charged with running such programmes of work must make sure they have a clear vision at the outset for what automation will achieve within their organisation. This will include clearly communicating this vision through the company structure via robust change management and gaining buy-in from all stakeholders. This should be reiterated throughout the entire lifecycle of any automation delivery.

2

There is no RPA strategy beyond the first few simple use cases which made up the initial business case

From our experience, we often see organisations who have deployed automation technology in a few, discrete, areas of the business and they have delivered fantastic results. The problems start once the most obvious processes have been automated and organisations try to expand RPA tooling into other areas of the business where processes are not immediately suitable for RPA.

Automation is often seen as the 'silver bullet' to tackling all business process inefficiency problems. But once the most obvious processes are automated it quickly becomes more challenging to unlock future efficiency gains. There are several reasons for this including; trying to tackle processes spanning multiple business units (which brings additional complexity), processes that require input data digitised, process steps needing standardisation or because of significant cognitive decision making existing in process flows.

To make such processes suitable for automation requires a concerted effort across the organisation to re-engineer processes or to include automation as one of several tools to use as part of a wider business transformation programme.

A much stronger strategy is needed, including a well-defined '**automation/transformation roadmap**' driven by executive sponsorship, built on robust business cases, with clear 3-5-year vision of what is to be achieved and with what tooling. Only then will the real benefits be realised - and without it, any vision of implementing an enterprise-wide capability of RPA will fail.

3

The organisation does not have access to the right talent pool to make their RPA vision a reality

When commencing their Automation journey, many organisations assume they already have the required capability in-house or have enough people available who are skilled in IT technologies and who will easily be able to 'pick-up' the required skills to help them launch their RPA programmes of work. The reality is very different.

Many RPA vendors state that their products run on 'low/no code' platforms that can be implemented by 'business users' with no real 'IT' experience. Whilst this may be an industry wide utopic desire, the current reality is rather different. To deliver a successful automation implementation, organisations require a team with a deep level of RPA specific expertise and experience. Process analysis, infrastructure, security, solution architecture, development, and project/change management skills built on solid automation experience is a must.

Demand for such people with the right qualifications, experience and knowledge in RPA technologies is fierce. To ensure success, it is imperative that organisations have access to talent pools beyond their organisational boundaries. This is especially important when first embarking on any Automation programme. Specialist providers, such as Sopra Steria, will not only steer the existing team deploying RPA but will be pivotal in mentoring team members to document and deliver quality, scalable, automated processes; provide insight on what processes are/are not suitable for automation and advice on future automation and Centre of Excellence roadmaps to ensure an organisation achieves its goals around any RPA investment.

By utilising an external talent pool, it will help position an organisation for future success in automation and help to achieve this far quicker than trying to organically grow this capability 'in-house' with no support.

4

RPA platforms have only been built for Proof of Concepts, not to scale for a wider business purpose

To have an 'enterprise' strength RPA capability requires a modern architecture that will be the foundation for digital transformation programmes, of which RPA technology is a core component. Yet, when it comes to adopting RPA technologies, most organisations start small with an initial Proof of Concept (PoC) or Pilot automation project on minimal hardware specifications. No real thought is given to the future infrastructure requirements and there is little formal engagement with Information security teams.

The definition of internal policies governing the use of the robotic software, accessing systems originally designed for human interaction only, is key. Consideration must be given to both robot user access controls as well as managing access for the human users who will be developing and running the robots.

The same is true when it comes to designing an RPA Infrastructure estate that is fit for purpose and can scale alongside the organisation's RPA vision and goals. Working with the IT teams from the offset to collectively agree on the relevant RPA IT strategy may introduce some 'short term' pain to any initial implementation, but it will allow an organisation to quickly scale the automation roadmap in the future. To not tackle such challenges early will inevitably have a significant impact on RPA programmes.

5

No one has a real focus or responsibility on the impact of RPA at an ethical or regulatory level

For any organisation deploying RPA technologies at scale it is important to anticipate and understand where the deployment of RPA solutions may compromise ethical or regulatory requirements. Failure to do so can leave the organisation legally exposed.

Automation algorithms are developed by people and then run by Robots. Because humans are involved in the process it may lead to the introduction of unconscious bias and decision making when developing certain RPA use cases.

Robots and AI need to be completely free of any bias, be it gender, race, sexuality, age, or disability. Any RPA solution needs to have the right insight, understanding and appreciation from a range of stakeholders who are responsible HR, Customer Service and Regulatory requirements to help ensure that no unconscious bias is introduced to any automated process.

Where should your organisation be focused to overcome these challenges?

Where business unit level implementation is initiated, it can often leave a landscape of silo'd robot developments requiring management on a granular level with little to no standardised governance. This can result in a complex robotics environment that fails to benefit from economies of scale with little control over process implementation.

Many organisations build bots without also creating the service requirements around them and this can lead to costly remediation programmes which often outweigh the benefit of the initiative. Once implemented, automated processes require ongoing as business applications and the environments they operate in change and evolve over time, as does the data flowing through them. A lack of coherent supporting documentation because of an organisation's rush to automate, often makes the situation worse because of knowledge gaps with key-skills and expertise at risk of loss.

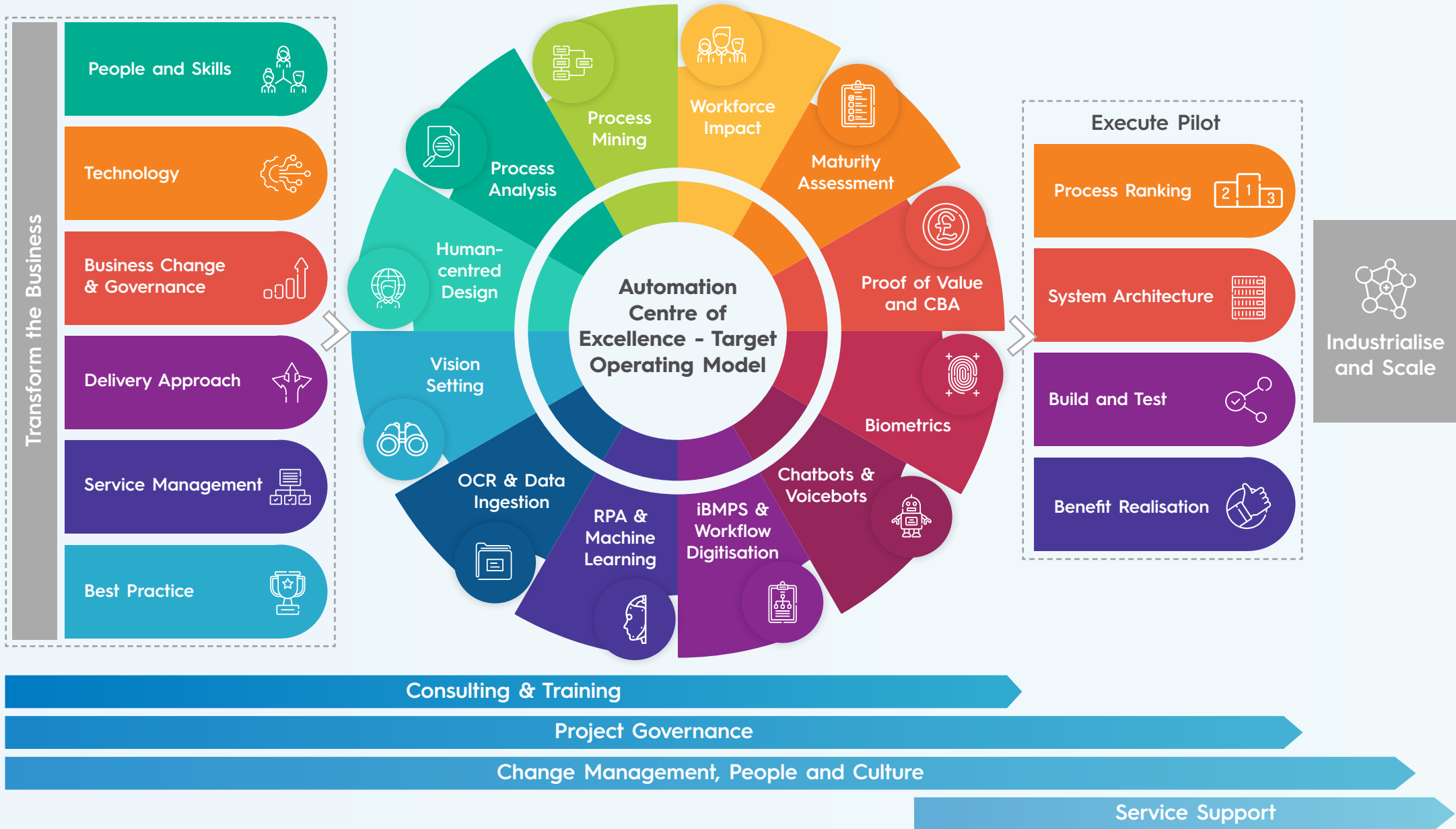
To overcome such challenges, an organisation should look to invest in an Enterprise-wide strategy for RPA sponsored by the executive team. Sopra Steria can assist with this. We can help an organisation to orchestrate an RPA strategy that not only considers all business areas, cultures and procedures, but also ensures that any implemented processes are fit for industry purpose and span across business units and include any supporting sub-processes/governing procedures.

Sopra Steria have an in-depth of knowledge around enterprise RPA and a plethora of skill-sets and experience across its industry-leading SME's while working closely with technology partners to ensure pricing models are competitive.

Developing an enterprise Centre of Excellence is a key element to the creation of this RPA strategy and affords the organisation a framework to centrally manage the governance and security requirements of RPA implementation. It also delivers a defined set of capabilities to return value from the full range of RPA capabilities.




The following diagram details the areas for which a Centre of Excellence would be responsible.



Understanding the enterprise requirements will enable an organisation to plan automations that will maximise return on investment. Use of both task and process mining can facilitate the mapping and understanding of the processes that support the business and the identification of any bottlenecks and inefficiencies that may exist within them. The data and analytics, visible through this mining, enables informed decisions to be made about which business cases to focus on to allow fast mobilisation of the RPA programme, whilst also supporting data lineage and data governance requirements.

Utilising task and process mining at the beginning of an RPA programme will also help to inform business cases and can also be used following implementation of the RPA programme, to provide automated monitoring of the processes, highlighting immediately if there are any issues within those processes. Process mining itself, will also bring the additional benefits of enhanced analytics, conformance monitoring, identification of bottlenecks and delays and transparency of processing. Implementing a Centre of Excellence also enables the organisation to reach further with their RPA programmes developing advanced intelligent RPA and machine learning.



Sopra Steria can work with you, your teams and wider business to create and manage a centre of excellence that aligns your requirements, the organisational strategy and supporting business cases, leaving no gaps in capability - thus ensuring successful implementation of the RPA strategy. As a trusted RPA partner, Sopra Steria will support you through the stages of developing a Centre of Excellence, ensuring resourcing or training requirements meet capability requirements, working with technology partners to ensure effective licencing models and supporting delivery of business cases through outcome-based assignments and resource augmentation.

Key factors for RPA success

In this paper, we have identified the key factors that hold organisations back from achieving the best possible results from their RPA investments. Based upon our experience of automation technologies and programmes of work at Sopra Steria we believe organisations who are not realising the benefits of RPA should re-visit their strategy and explore some fundamental areas:



When was the last time you re-visited your RPA vision?

If your RPA business case isn't living up to expectations then the executive sponsor should re-engage with the business and re-visit the RPA vision. At Sopra Steria we recommend a running a number of workshops with interested stakeholders to discuss concerns and identify where the implementation has not delivered on expectations.



Reevaluate the business case

If the business case isn't working re-visit it and ask yourself the questions - Did we collect the right data? Did we choose the right processes to automate? Did we really understand our own processes and the number of possible outcomes requiring manual intervention? If we could change one aspect of the delivery to improve the results what would it be? Do we know what 'success' looks like and do we understand what the true impact has been on our business and our customers to date?



Understand the talent gaps

Take the time to understand where the talent gaps around RPA capability exist in your organisation. Then, work out who you should partner with to fill these skill gaps, so you can benefit from external insights and knowledge, as well as having skilled people available to undertake your programmes of work. This will be quicker than trying to recruit or grow capability from within your organisation in the short term.



Stop the isolation

If you have found your RPA team is absorbed into the IT department, transition them back out into the business. Get the 'decision making' responsibility more aligned to business units, and include process owners, so at least one business stakeholder has input into key decisions. This will encourage the team to understand more about the business impact their project is having and the expectations around outcomes. This point links back to re-visiting the RPA vision. RPA programmes can only be successful if business teams are involved.



Re-evaluate your IT architecture

Take the time to not only understand the business processes which will be automated, but the IT infrastructure required to run automation at scale. Do RPA related incidents get logged via your service desk to allow you to assess the true impact (good or bad) that such incidents may be having on the organisations operational resources. Through collaboration you will quickly discover what might be holding you back or where further investments may be needed for improvement.



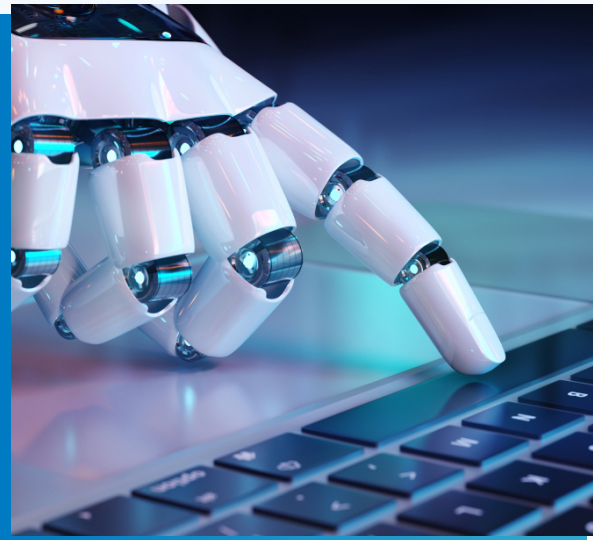
Monitor, measure and improve

As you roll through each part of the change programme, make sure you are capturing the right data from the right people. If improvements are required, deliver them incrementally and not all at once. At Sopra Steria, we have seen many RPA projects fail to start as company executives are asked for a significant amount of investment which is deemed too expensive and/or high risk to the organisation. Instead, focus on starting small, plan for scale and keep revisiting the business case measuring outcomes and articulating the benefits back to key business and technology stakeholders.



Ethics and Regulation

An often-overlooked area is the role of automation and its impact ethically, socially and in highly regulated environments. Ask the subject matter experts in your organisation to give you a full picture of the impact of RPA from an ethical and regulatory standpoint. Include these experts in your decision making and your wider programmes of work. You may be surprised at just how much value they can add, not only in their own respective areas, but in terms of the customer and employee experience as well.



Final thoughts

There are many benefits to be gained from a well-considered RPA programme, the immediate and most accessible being the delivery of faster processing at a lower cost. However, the benefits to be gained reach far beyond this.

- The reduction in manual intervention can improve accuracy, reduce risk/fraud, apply compliance, and minimise the exposure of sensitive data. The freeing up of human resource from routine processing allows them to focus on more value-added activities and the hybrid mix of human and digital workers, playing to the strengths of each, can bring greater job satisfaction of task efficiency as well as security to employees.
- Customer satisfaction can be greatly enhanced, routine requests can be dealt with quickly and efficiently allowing Customer Service Handlers, with more time to focus, to resolve often more emotionally connected and complex issues leading to an increase in business KPI's.
- The analytics made available through RPA can deliver longer term benefit. A better understanding and the quantifying of process exceptions brings an opportunity to make changes that will reduce or remove them. The increased exposure of data that might previously have been hidden and the removal of manual errors, can lead to deeper and more accurate insight – which ultimately creates an environment that accommodates a Lean approach which will impact directly on training requirements, customer satisfaction, employee job satisfaction and reduced cost per process.
- By direct consequence, once a single robot has been trained to perform a process, the entire digital workforce has also. So it becomes very easy to quickly scale the digital resources performing a given process to suit seasonal, regulatory, or ad-hoc demand.

There is clearly a benefit, not only to the business, but also to the employee, the customer, and ultimately, the shareholder.

It will be easier to gain buy-in for RPA investment if a strategy is already in place to realise these benefits. The strategy should reflect a clear automation vision (roadmap) with desired outcomes supported by robust business cases and should be continually revisited to ensure the roadmap stays on track.

It's therefore imperative to assess automation potential across departments, to prevent difficulties for the introduction of future automation, but equally important to prioritise and pick the right processes to maximise benefit. Mature, repetitive, business rule driven processes that have already been optimised are the ideal. Process mining is a useful tool to assist with this and other process issues. It can be useful to start the automation journey with a process that has a known issue or bottleneck to realise some immediate benefit and drive further RPA change. Keeping in mind that implementation of the initial process will flush out all the pain points of implementing a technology, new ways of working can and should always involve the business, IT, Security, BAU teams and a strong Technology Partner such as Sopra Steria.

Creating a business change team, to educate and support staff along the digital journey will ensure a proactive and effective approach to automated operation. Automation is not about job replacement but about empowering individuals to focus on what they do best. By establishing a **'Centre of Excellence'** that includes continuous improvement capability and relationships with IT, governance, and security, the feasibility of an automation proposal can be assessed in conjunction with the existing robotic landscape. This allows the business owner to monitor and drive towards to completion through definition, development, implementation, scheduling and control - ensuring that growth is realised in a controlled and sustainable way.

As discussed, now is the time for organisations to get their RPA strategy right. RPA technologies give leaders in financial services organisations a new set of tools for improving their organisation. But remember, unlocking RPA's potential isn't just down to an IT or Innovation team, it must be a whole business project, where all stakeholders are bought into business process change enabled by RPA technologies and the right Centre of Excellence to support the strategy.



More Information

At Sopra Steria we provide a bespoke range of Consulting, IT and Business Process Outsourcing services to Public and Private Sector organisations across the UK.

For more information on our RPA solutions please contact us at the details below:

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We look forward to working with you.

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