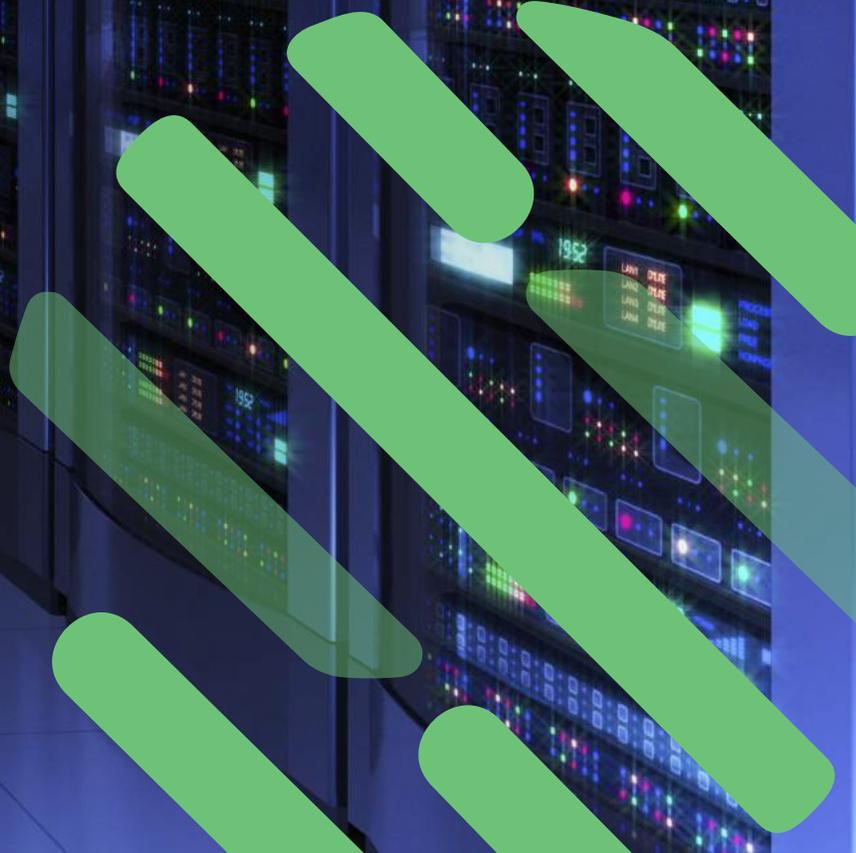




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Robotic Process Transformation and the Drive for an Improved Customer Experience



Imagine a process improvement that increases productivity not by 10%, or 50%, but 1,000% or more. Envision reducing cycle times by days or weeks, and slashing operations costs by at least 45%. Picture boosting customer satisfaction by 18% practically overnight. Executives across all industries are faced with the need to please increasingly demanding stakeholders and tech-savvy customers—while reducing the cost of operations. That’s why more and more organizations are leveraging the power of Robotic Process Automation (RPA).

“Robots,” in this context are software routines that can be programmed to use enterprise applications to gather, read/understand, react to and execute new data entry activity according to business rules. Robots behave just like a well-trained employee. From the data center’s perspective, each robotic routine appears to be a hyper-fast user, performing keyboard and mouse-driven tasks, 24/7 with zero errors.

The concept of “robots” in an industry that relies on customer satisfaction and the “human touch” may send shivers down some spines. However, RPA is ideal for many processes, particularly labor-intensive ones such as gathering data from multiple applications, managing vendor and client master data records, and dual data entry. RPA is a transformative process that brings together human and virtual agents with customers during each process, providing a faster, more effective, and higher-quality customer experience. Any rules-based, repetitive process that draws on or feeds information to multiple data systems may benefit from the relentless accuracy of a tireless robot.

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Why Robotics May Be the Next Industrial Revolution

RPA is a software platform that integrates with any IT application or website to perform complex rules-based work. That means it can interface neatly with existing systems, whether they are based on Java, .Net, Citrix, web, mainframe or SAP. Even better, it navigates through the user interface of an application in the same way a human would. RPA reproduces human decision making and data entry using a virtual keyboard and mouse, controlling applications through the existing commands of whatever legacy systems are already in place. They become tireless virtual employees working alongside humans who handle tasks that robots can't.

That partnership, in fact, is why RPA makes eminent sense for a variety of companies. Many organizations are global, with complex systems, diverse language and regulatory requirements, and an absolute need for data security, accuracy, risk mitigation, regulatory compliance and processing efficiency.

Though the trend toward Artificial Intelligence and robots that learn from each interaction is receiving a lot of buzz, current capabilities in this regard do not eliminate the need for human oversight and intelligence. For the most part, executives do not want robotic agents to decide how best to process an item; they want clearly defined and controlled procedures with tolerances and business exceptions, and experienced team members handling those exceptions.

And... they want lower service costs, greater accuracy and faster cycle times.

So, how can RPA be leveraged to attain these benefits without sacrificing customer trust? Here are six ways.

1. Use Robots to Focus on People

Today's customers expect instant answers, personalized service and convenient access from anywhere¹. If something goes wrong, they want a "real" person to handle their issue, and they don't want to wait days for someone to work through the backlog to get to it.

RPA solves many of these issues, first through its ability to link disparate applications into one transparent system, and then by eliminating human error. A task that might take a fully trained human ten minutes to accomplish may take a robot one or two—or less—and the robot never forgets to send an acknowledgement to the customer, the sales representative, accounting and any other department that requires the information. Thus, the all-important initial customer experience is accomplished quickly, smoothly and with satisfying assurance of equally good service to come.

Of greater importance, it frees the staff that had handled such processes manually to more highly valued work that requires complex interpretation, decision-making, discretion and personalized customer interaction (best done by humans)—which is so appreciated by customers.

Anywhere between three and twenty FTEs can be automated by a single robot.

This depends on the speed of the systems, the complexity of the process

¹Customer Experience Insight, "Customers Want More: 5 New Expectations You Must Meet Now"

and the hours the robot will run. Thus, RPA can bring competitive advantage to savvy adopters by enhancing the customer experience through the speed, 24/7 responsiveness, convenience and accuracy of RPA.

2. Harness Robotic Efficiency to Human Intuition

Per the Institute of Robotic Process Automation (IRPA), out of every 100 steps, a human is likely to make 10 errors, even when carrying out somewhat redundant work². Most employees hate repetitive, boring tasks; the more bored they are, the likelier they are to make mistakes or to look for another job. This contributes directly to two of the biggest challenges facing executives today: quality control issues and finding qualified staff to do the work. A robot requires no training curve, doesn't get bored and cannot make a mistake; it simply follows the established rules, and does it the same way every time, flagging exceptions for human eyes to examine further.

On the other hand, there is no substitute for human intelligence in analyzing data and determining the proper action for exceptions to established processes. Well-defined RPA systems not only automate routine tasks, they also gather and store all that information in ways previously impossible or too cumbersome for timely, detailed analysis. Now, data can be combined with analytic tools to continuously improve the customer experience and inspire lifelong loyalty. Experienced personnel can analyze trends, anticipate customer needs, spot process bottlenecks, head off fraud and establish policies that quickly route questions to the proper group for fast resolution.

3. Improved Employee Satisfaction

While one may be concerned that robots are here to replace humans, this is simply a myth. Humans are needed to enable artificial intelligence. These technologies are not independent from humans and are not able to reproduce the higher-level thinking of which humans are capable.

RPA allows employees to increase their productivity by improving their efficiency. Freeing staff to tackle more challenging work makes much better use of human intuition and insight while helping employees grow their skills—a much more satisfying long-term career outlook than spending every day keying the same data into the same fields over and over.

4. Improve the Whole Value Chain—And Customer Satisfaction Too

RPA works best where the underlying processes are rules-based, repetitive and frequent. In the insurance industry for example, RPA can help with claim processing, enrollment, new policy creation and renewals, premium billings, investment management, as well as statutory and regulatory reporting. In healthcare, RPA brings benefits to revenue cycle management, contract loading, credentialing and vendor payer management. In the travel industry, airline fare entry and audits, as well as refund management can all be improved by implementing RPA.

In addition, RPA quickly scales up or down to accommodate seasonal peaks or unexpected market downturns, often obviating the need to hire, train or lay off staff³. Robots can be “onboarded” as they come online by the dozens or thousands,

and never lose their skills during dormant periods. Refresher training consists of a simple update of the business rules.

The modern world moves at speeds unimaginable even ten years ago. When RPA is implemented, paperwork submitted from around the world remains in perpetual motion, no longer slowed down by holidays, seasonal pressures, the weather or other unforeseen issues.

5. Drive Improvement without IT Disruption

Because RPA is capable of seamlessly linking to existing systems, deploying automation can take as little as four weeks for simpler processes, and produce return on investment quickly, usually within a single year⁴. There are no hard-and-fast rules as to which parts of an industry process model will suit robotics, but RPA returns the highest benefit when there is:

- A processing environment with interfaces between different systems that require some exchange of data, possibly with some rules-based variation in the process steps required
- An environment that requires consolidating information from multiple systems where writing an interface for a data warehouse solution is too time-consuming, costly or is not justified based on the expected lifecycle of one or more of the systems
- A process where data needs to be validated using an external source (probably online)
- A process where data must be pulled from multiple systems/sites and made available to an agent in a consolidated form (e.g., claims, payroll processing, collections, order management)
- A process that is high-volume, workflow enabled, labor intensive and input is digital

² Institute for Robotic Process Automation (IRPA), “Benefits of RPA”

³ UIPath, “Hidden Benefits of RPA: Scalability”

⁴ Ibid, IRPA

Low-volume processes with unstructured inputs such as voice, letters, or faxes and that require human judgment for handling each case are unsuited to RPA. However, RPA can be instrumental in solving multi-system complexity and diversity in systems that are poorly or not yet integrated, but which must meet industry compliance or servicing demands. Being system agnostic, RPA requires no elaborate technology upgrades or heavy IT intervention, just a good platform for accessing data, monitoring the robotics, and passing work between people and robots. A good business process transformation provider experienced with RPA will have a team that works with operations staff to establish business rules and monitor systems 24/7, making changes as required to accommodate unforeseen circumstances, updates and more.

A keen focus on the customer experience enables better outcomes in RPA deployments. All processes should be analyzed and redesigned to provide an excellent customer experience at the lowest cost with the greatest efficiency. One proven methodology for deploying RPA uses an A3 approach: Assess, Automate and Accelerate.

Step 1: Assess the Landscape

- Understand the “As Is”
- Design robotics subjectivity tables and decision matrixes
- Create a technology-enabled manual process design
- Create business requirement documents (BRDs) for automation and platform development

Step 2: Automate the Exceptions

- Automated decisions and governances expose exceptions in processes, data and native tools
- Exception data is analyzed to provide and prioritize process improvement and exception automation opportunities

Step 3: Accelerate the Process

- Establish platform-enabled prioritization of tasks that bring accuracy, repeatability and efficiency to the process

- Utilize proprietary technology to create a single, common user interface reducing inefficient ‘swivel seating’
- Institute Six Sigma Lean management

Once suitable processes are identified, implementation teams can leverage the operations know-how of existing process teams to write the business rules, test and refine the new robots, and ensure that each stage of the process is complete before an application or claim moves to the next.

The increased accuracy provided by RPA leads directly to higher customer satisfaction.

6. Improve Governance and Compliance

In addition to lower costs and greater efficiency in core functions, RPA also drives better compliance, audits, governance and security. Robotic processing necessarily documents every transaction and all the rules pertaining to it, providing transparency to auditors and consistency to analytics. It also facilitates timely reporting to managers and executives at all levels. Its built-in workflows not only enhance processing efficiency by enforcing rules and routing tasks to appropriate agents; it also safeguards data from unauthorized human eyes and provides detailed audit trails regarding data access and flow.

Because the number and functionality of robots within the processing environment is so flexible, RPA can be used to adapt automated processes to local regulations and customs, extending their reach into formerly difficult locales without degrading control structures.



Get Ready to Grow

RPA is a solution whose time has come. The “do more with less” mentality that drives so many business decisions has brought automation to the forefront of consideration when enterprises evaluate solutions for process improvement. Executives seeking innovative solutions that deliver the highest value and return on investment are increasingly looking for expertise in robotics and analytics from process transformation providers, viewing these two solution areas as critical drivers of expansion.

Slashing costs is only one of the benefits RPA delivers. Freeing FTEs to higher-value work enables insurers to service more customers, dig into analytics that help drive more informed business decisions, and staff business projects that have been on hold for years for lack of personnel. Companies can put more resources into understanding customer needs and expectations, which in turn leads to market innovations that produce highly satisfied, loyal customers.

Growth, therefore, is a definitive byproduct of RPA, through the steady, long-term improvement of the customer experience that burnishes the company’s brand and continuously expands its customer base. RPA is the ultimate bridge between technological efficiency and the human insight that customers crave.

For more information on how we can help you transform your processes, visit us at www.sutherlandglobal.com, email us at sales@sutherlandglobal.com or call 1-800-388-4557 ext. 6123.

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