



How to break through the automation ceiling

And get your business using RPA at scale

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Many business leaders see the value of automation. So why aren't companies embracing it wholeheartedly?

Businesses in all industries are being squeezed, with higher demands from both customers and stakeholders. They need to find new ways to work, with fewer errors, faster outcomes, and higher productivity.

Automation is most beneficial when it picks up the necessary, but menial and repetitive, tasks from human employees, and helps them to be more effective at higher-value tasks. 'Digital Workers' – bots working alongside humans to boost productivity and innovation – can augment existing staff to offer exactly what businesses need to survive and grow: perfect accuracy, efficiency, and 24/7 service. So for most large companies, it's not a question of if automation will arrive, but when and how.

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is becoming a more widely accepted business practice. 53% of businesses had begun to adopt RPA by 2018, according to Deloitte – and 72% are expected to adopt it in some capacity by 2020.

But those statistics don't tell the whole story. Even though businesses are starting to investigate the possibilities of RPA, it's often not being explored on a 'big picture' level. Despite the high adoption rates for automation, many of those businesses are only deploying RPA in a limited capacity. Just 3% of organizations have scaled their digital workforce. That means companies are still hiring thousands of people to work like robots on manual, repetitive tasks – instead of scaling their RPA, and training those staff to work alongside robots.

Why does this disconnect occur? Most early forays into RPA are commissioned by function leaders – HR, Finance, Procurement – to solve specific challenges. Automation is seen as a point solution, used to solve just one niche problem. And, crucially, it's not being joined up by different departments.

In this paper, we'll cover some of the common stumbling blocks for RPA, then delve into solutions to help you scale your automation projects.



53% of businesses had begun to adopt RPA by 2018*

* Global RPA Survey 2018 | Deloitte. (2018, April 23).

Has your automation already reached its upper limit?

A lot of automation projects start off with a small-scale proof of concept. Automation is deployed in one discrete scenario, usually to speed up a process which is currently taking up too much time.

A proof of concept is affordable, quick to launch, and doesn't need a huge decision-making process to implement. For many businesses, it makes complete sense.

But the assembly line model – where work is split up into small tasks which can be given to separate Digital Workers – isn't ideal. It just recreates the same work structure that you are currently doing with human staff, but faster. There are obvious efficiency and speed benefits, but if you aren't taking a 'big picture' view, you'll just build a faster version of your existing company... rather than using RPA to reimagine how it could work better.

Here are a couple of simple tips to avoid this 'automation ceiling'.

1 Get subject matter experts involved early.

RPA can be implemented by non-IT professionals, but they are rarely the ones who are given the responsibility. IT and operations are most likely to have a wide view of where automation could benefit other areas of the business, but their technical expertise needs to be matched up with the people who actually run the processes day to day. Those teams may also be building something similar already, so you can avoid duplicated work by joining forces.

2 Build the expertise in-house.

When there are no RPA experts in the business, you can end up relying on consultants and contractors who will take the knowledge with them when they leave. As you expand your digital workforce, you should also start to build an RPA team who can own it.

Has demand for automation outstripped your ability to deliver?

At the opposite end of the scale, some companies will experience 'automation overload'. This is where their pilot project is so successful and well-received by leaders in their business, that there is a clamour to get RPA applied in a raft of other scenarios.

On the one hand, it's not a bad problem to have. You've done a great job of getting your colleagues and senior staff on board with the concept of automation, and they can all clearly see the benefits for their own teams.

However, you run two risks in this case.

Firstly, the queue for automation may grow out of control, and your project will lose momentum as leaders lose enthusiasm who are kept waiting too long.

Secondly, if you accept every request for RPA, you might not always be able to replicate the same level of success as your initial pilot. In which case, your results are diluted, and automation loses its shine.

It's very achievable to prevent these negative outcomes – but it requires some planning from the early stages:

1

Choose the right processes to automate.

The most successful companies are using Lean techniques to analyze, map and identify the right processes for automation. You can work with Lean specialists and staff on the ground who know the processes best to get the insight you need. Then use that to select suitable processes, and it will make a noticeable improvement on the speed and quality of your automation projects.

2

Build an Automation Center of Excellence (CoE).

To scale their RPA program, many organizations are launching their own Automation CoE that acts as a 'mission control' for bots. Having an Automation CoE allows many more people in the business to get involved in discrete RPA projects, with the central team advising on best practices, and offering support and maintenance.

Has your people strategy kept up with your RPA program?

Lastly, we have to acknowledge that automation is a loaded term – for a lot of people, there are concerns about job security whenever automation is mentioned. The more you plan to expand your automation project into new areas of the business, the more important your communications are to its success.

Here are some suggestions on how to integrate Digital Workers into teams, at all levels.

Senior leadership

Focusing on opportunities, rather than cost reduction, can be a powerful way to get the message across – especially to risk-averse business leaders who are concerned about job losses. For example, automation can help overstretched finance teams get home on time at month-end, instead of working late nights. It can save admin time for pharmaceutical researchers, so they can get on with life-saving research. Or it can create new revenue streams for business units, making the existing staff more productive.

If interest is low, fostering competition between potential executive owners is sometimes a good way to generate buzz, instead of chasing each of them individually for budget. That said, it's important to strike while the iron is hot, and keep your waiting list manageable – make sure that once people are engaged, the bots are delivered in a reasonable time.

Delivery teams

Part of the challenge is helping existing staff understand how they're going to interact with RPA and showing them that automation is accessible to them. It's important to establish this early – and to pick the right automation partner to support and advise you.

Some of our clients have helped integrate bots into their workforce by endowing them with human qualities. Naming the bots can help staff to embrace them as virtual colleagues. For instance, it helps to know 'Bob' is a finance employee following existing finance procedures.

On a practical level it helps with internal processes too. Define a bot as a 'virtual employee' with a functional manager, then if 'Bob' needs an SAP ID for example, the manager has the responsibility to request it. At one of our clients, a bot was so successful and well-integrated that it was nominated by the team for Employee Of The Month.

What success looks like

None of these challenges should distract from the end goal – a digital workforce that fundamentally improves the way your business operates. For companies that set up correctly and scale their automation projects sustainably, the results are often outstanding.

Bancolombia saved over 127,000 hours of admin time and saw a 1,300% return on investment

Huge return on investment for Bancolombia

Bancolombia, one of Latin America's largest financial groups, are working with Automation Anywhere to develop their digital workforce – from customer service to back-office processes. Following an initial proof of concept, the bank is now automating its repetitive tasks and transforming their ways of working for the entire digital workforce. In the first year of the pilot, Bancolombia saved over 127,000 hours of admin time and saw a 1,300% return on investment.

“We have achieved a 50% increase in customer service efficiency in the branches where front-office automation has been implemented.”

Jorge Ivan Otalvaro, VP Service Delivery and Operations

What success looks like

Millions in additional daily cashflow for Quad/Graphics

Quad/Graphics wanted to liberate employees to focus on analytical tasks rather than routine repetitive ones. In early 2017, Quad/Graphics deployed Automation Anywhere RPA as a pilot project in the finance department to streamline payments processing. After initial success there, the RPA team began soliciting ideas for manual processes to automate from employees throughout the business. They then worked with the employees on feasibility assessments to confirm whether RPA was the right fit for a particular process challenge. This collaborative, grassroots approach has led to RPA being deployed in 19 departments, and has increased cashflow by \$10m per day.

\$10million/day

Increased cashflow

19

Departments now depend on Automation Anywhere RPA

20

Complex business processes automated

26

Simple business processes automated

200%

RPA expansion planned within 12 months

10

Weeks to get bots into production

46

Bots in production

“Because of the quick wins we achieved with RPA in our first pilots, word spread like wildfire throughout the business as to what RPA could do for our employees.”

Sarah Butzer, Controller, Quad/Graphics

Getting started today

Unlike other large technology deployments like a CRM or ERP system, it's quicker and easier to hit the ground running with your digital workforce. With Automation Anywhere's RPA platform, you can deploy Digital Workers immediately without needing to integrate with existing software stacks.

“While the first bot took 12 weeks to implement, current bot projects are executed in less than 3 weeks. And we keep improving those times.”

Deputy Head of Trading Operations, Man Group

Businesses can start automating within weeks, and see their investment paid back multiple times within the year. Plus, the software can be set up without in-depth programming knowledge – so it's just as accessible for your Head of HR as your IT Director.

Automation Anywhere provides the world's leading marketplace for bots and Digital Workers to automate business processes 70% faster and reduce deployment costs by 50%. Whether you are looking to automate a task, a process, or parts of a job role, ready-to-deploy bots and Digital Workers from the Bot Store have you covered.

Your automation partner

Automation Anywhere empowers the people whose ideas, thoughts and focus make the companies they work for great. Our Digital Workforce Platform combines RPA, cognitive capabilities and embedded smart analytics. We're here to help liberate staff from the monotony of administrative tasks and deliver massive value for your business through automation.

Whether you're already on your RPA journey and looking to scale it further, or just exploring how it could work for your business, we can help. Book a demo with Automation Anywhere today to find out more about the world's most advanced RPA platform.

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