5 Tips to avoid the pitfalls of the robotic automation hype

By Grant Hesse

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RPA (Robotic Process Automation) is all the hype right now, but how can you be successful and avoid the pitfalls?

RPA is not new by any means, but with the advent of the latest software it has become much easier to implement and companies are eager to jump onto the digital transformation bandwagon in their rush to not miss out. This can lead to lengthy projects that overrun on cost and schedule with no deliverable at the end.

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So, what are the key aspects of delivering a successful RPA solution while avoiding all the hype and pitfalls that go with it? Here are five tips that could help you ensure you start off and continue on the right track:

1. Partnerships

Who are you working with?

There are many 'experts' that have suddenly sprung up in the RPA arena, but their area of expertise is often limited to the software domain.

This will require you to free up resources within your team to provide the details of the business process to be automated. Working with an RPA company such as North Wind Digital that has both the software and business domain expertise in-house is the way to go.

This is likely to provide you with the quickest return on investment, identify areas most at risk and those that will make the biggest savings in time. Working in a partnership based on trust allows for diverse ideas to be brought to the fore which results not in a 1+1 = 2 equation, but more like 1 + 1 =100!

You ultimately want a partner that will be with you for the RPA journey who can relate to your business requirements and has the skills to translate those into a deliverable.

2. Deployment

Is it taking forever to deploy and see any results?

The process has been discussed, drawn up, changed, developed, tested - but where is it?

Often large software organisations can struggle to deliver in a timely manner as they are managing many projects and you are just one of the many. They also have many lengthy bureaucratic processes that make it difficult to respond to changing requirements and processes.

The ideal partner organisation will provide a good rigid Waterfall approach combined with an Agile development methodology. This best of both worlds scenario ensures that the requirements and specification phases are still completed first, but with added Agile methodology the customer becomes part of the development process.

This allows for changes to be made to the original design during the process to ensure the best solution is delivered in the shortest possible time without any lengthy rework.

Robotic process automation enables the era of self-service delivery
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3. Return on investment

Are you automating the right processes for the best type of return?

A return does not always have to mean cost savings as there are huge benefits in reducing risk or saving time on menial tasks. Often one of the most overlooked benefits is the removal of frustrating tasks that no one wants to do. All these benefits if realised may ensure key staff are more gainfully employed performing tasks that add true value to the business process. The key is to pick the right processes to automate taking all factors into account.

4. Infrastructure

How responsive to change is your IT provider and is this holding you back?

Moving your RPA provisioning to a cloud-based solution allows you to instantly deploy new processes and to scale these across the organisation. This combined with the Agile methodology allows for pilot programs to be deployed and once

agreed to, be instantly scaled to the larger organization. Global access to these services and guaranteed server uptime are huge benefits allowing you to focus on the business processes.

5. Planning for the future

So, what's next?

RPA should not end at the automating of a single simple process but is the start of a journey that when working in a good partnership will yield truly exponential results. The journey may start with simple tasks but as the level of automation within your organisation grows and the old systems are digitised there will be a reduction in the need for simple automation. The next steps in the journey will lead to more cognitive solutions where intelligent robots become your digital assistant, analysing and predicting your requirements.

RPA is here - now. It is big and will continue to grow as part of the ongoing digital transformation, but that doesn't mean it provides a cure-all solution. At the end, it is still the human relationships that will determine the success or failure of the RPA journey that is undertaken.

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