

A new era dawns for IPA

Full Interaction Process Automation (IPA) has long been a dream of enterprises everywhere, but until now, the 'rip and replace' factor has stood in the way of achieving it.

 By [Karl Reed](#) 12 Jun 2013

In the ideal scenario, a customer calling a contact centre expects a full and immediate resolution to his problem or query. To resolve the query, the agent would need a single view of every interaction the customer has ever had with the company, right down to the financial and account information, and any CRM data.

The old 'Rip and Replace system

The problem is that in most cases, the data relevant to a customer does not only reside in disconnected silos throughout the enterprise, much of it can also be found in systems outside the company's control.

In South Africa, most organisations see the immense potential benefits of IPA, but achieving this vision of fully integrated and streamlined processes is not a simple matter.

Enterprises usually have legacy systems that have evolved over time, at huge expense and with a great deal of effort. You may have some data residing in a highly effective, but legacy, financial system; other data in your CRM system, and yet more residing in your contact centre.

Some of these systems may be so old that the developers who built them are no longer available. Then there is the data and processes beyond the enterprise's control - and residing with a third party.

For several years, companies have sought a true single view of the customer and automation of all processes, but they have stopped short when it emerged that the only way to achieve this would be to 'rip and replace' all existing systems, at a potential cost of tens of millions of rands.

The benefits of IPA

Fortunately, a new era of computing has dawned, and it is now possible to automate and streamline the flow of information and processes between people, departments and divisions - without having to 'rip and replace' existing systems.

Organisations are now able to build on their existing investment by adding a software layer that retrieves or the relevant data from the various systems - both internal and external, automatically and without human intervention, to present a single view of the customer.

With IPA in place an enterprise might, for example, set up a rule that when the CFO approves a work item, launches five other actions of work. For example, it can SMS an update to the customer, launch a campaign, notify an agent to call the customer, or inform the marketing department.

With IPA, there is no risk of people forgetting to pick up the phone or sign a piece of paper, and enterprises can enter the truly automated, paperless environment at last.

Providing a complete overview

IPA is also able to facilitate external processes. External processes can also be integrated into the overall system allowing an enterprise the ability to provide accurate customer feedback, as well as provide visibility into the process which allows management to step in to speed up processes if necessary.

The benefits to enterprises of effective IPA are obvious: a shorter issue resolution time- they can drop this time by over half; they are delivering the correct feedback much faster; there is a dramatic reduction in the error rate because there is no risk of human error.

The company also benefits from lower overheads, faster processes, and better customer service. Importantly, IPA can deliver a single view of all processes and customer interactions.

IPA delivers a complete view that can be used as a tool for the analysis of business processes, in order to identify areas for improvement at a strategic level.

ABOUT KARL REED

Karl Reed is Chief Marketing & Solutions Officer at Eingo
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