6 Things to Consider Before Implementing RPA or Intelligent Automation

Before implementing RPA or intelligent automation, ask yourself these questions: What kind of automation rate and/or labor cost reduction does traditional RPA yield? What are the types of incremental efficiencies we're seeing from cognitive or AI fueled platform? What should you do if you've already made a commitment to traditional RPA, but have hit a wall in regards to cost save and automation rates? If you haven't made the move to traditional RPA, should you start with RPA or go straight to intelligent automation?

Frank Casale, Founder at IRPA AI, sat down with Creamheld Pepito, Director of Engineering, Digital Content and Process Solutions at Northwestern Mutual, Michael Engel, Intelligent Automation Leader at PwC and Tom Young, Managing Partner at RUMJog Enterprises to find out the answers to the questions and more in this interview.

Q Why do you believe that so many people today are still focused primarily on RPA as opposed to the more intelligent, powerful tools?

TY This is a classic example of you must walk before you can run. The business case for RPA is tremendous. However, understand that no matter how good the business case is, there are two waves of value behind the RPA business case that in many cases are much larger that the RPA wave.

CP RPA is straightforward. The more intelligent tools require re-thinking of existing processes.

ME Considering that most process automation programs are focused on user driven technologies, it makes perfect sense that firms are making the most out of RPA before moving on to other technologies. The reason RPA became popular in recent years is due to the accessibility through a no code editors. Other, more advanced technologies that are user driven are still emerging.

Q What kind of automation rate and/or labor cost reduction have you seen, on average, in regards to traditional RPA approach?

TY The most straight forward early opportunities for RPA are with structured work that typically resides in routine work flows. Repeatable, regular, and something tied to set of structured rules. In these cases, the business case is asymmetric. That is for a small one-time investment to setup, you get a very large recurring benefit. We encourage clients to re-invest a significant portion of the benefits back into the system – kind of like a dividend reinvestment program.

CP We are going for interim benefits - Our ultimate goal is improved client experience.

Q What kind of incremental efficiencies are you seeing for those who go to more of a cognitive or AI fueled platform?

TY Cognitive and AI promise to have even bigger impacts to the ecosystem, however we are still a few years away from broad applications. In Cognitive, the cases that are being deployed now involve the use of cognitive agents to assist or replace human customer service agents. The up-front investment is much larger for clients which is why we suggest funding this through the benefits of RPA deployments. For the broader AI category, machine learning on large data sets is the "here and now" opportunity. To exploit productive machine learning, you much have very larger data sets to mine. Again, the investments and one-time cost to setup is relatively high compared to RPA.

CP Cycle time reductions, better and faster decisions.

Q

What is your advice to those who have already made a commitment to traditional RPA, but have hit a wall in regards to cost save and automation rates?

TY

To move beyond the wall of RPA, you have to start pursuing advanced orchestrations and new business process design. A "process first" strategy that re-imagines business workflow that incorporates the use of RPA and the more advanced components of AI and Cognitive. This is where art meets science. The skills to re-imagine workflow this way resides in very few people as people either know process or they know technology, not both. So consider cross-training your top people.

CP

It's time to rethink your processes. Are there forms you can get rid of? What information can speed up or increase the quality of human decisions?

ME

Revisit your automation strategy and approach before rethinking your platforms. More often than not, the "wall" is about running out of low hanging fruit that leads to fingers & toes type of activity automation and is not really a factor of the technology. Making RPA one of several levers that include organizational and reengineering opportunities than can be pulled to transform a process is a real benefit multiplier.

Q

For those who have not made the move to traditional RPA, would you recommend that they continue to start with RPA or go straight to intelligent automation?

TY

Start with RPA but develop an overall roadmap so that you have a sense on the stages of your transformation. The roadmap will help formalize the re-investment plans and help with focus and delivering business results on a cadence to build credibility within your organization.

CP This really depends on the use case. RPA is one tool among many. It depends on the processes of concern and the priorities of the company.

ME I think the recommendation would be to take stock in what other technologies you already have in the organization. We're seeing a real trend in process automation toward process orchestration. This implies taking advantage of BPM platforms to combine the capabilities of both people and technologies in a client's eco-system to provide a stepwise approach to get to Intelligent Automation. This approach also allows for a more collaborative relationship between IT and the business to make better use of skills and available resources.

Q Is there any other general advice or comments that you'd give about intelligent automation?

TY The world of RPA, Cognitive, and AI is all that it is cracked up to be. The hype Is real. However, this world is a jungle and if you are not familiar with the jungle, hire a jungle guide. Because the market is moving so fast, time is your enemy. A jungle guide will help you avoid the mistakes that are common to those unfamiliar with the environment and this will save you many headaches and more importantly save you time as you navigate the jungle.

CP Intelligent automation is a broad category. It could facilitate straight through processing, autonomous decision making or enhance the humans involved in the process. But when automation autonomously gets better over time, that machine learning ability sets it apart from all other kinds of automations.

ME Be purposeful in how you define Intelligent Automation. Not all organizations view it as simply using components of AI to automate. How Intelligent Automation is defined will have dramatic impacts on the overall operating model that will be required for process automation.

30-Min Briefing on Intelligent Automation for IT Operations

The Institute for Robotic Process Automation & AI (IRPA AI) is offering a complimentary 30-minute phone briefing that will cover intelligent automation for IT operations. Take advantage of this briefing to learn about topics like:

- The difference between intelligent automation vs. automation in regards to IT operations

- How the IT paradigm has dramatically changed

- The journey to AI technology for IT operations

- The business and tech issues that are being resolved

- How to measure outcomes and experiences

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About Creamheld Pepito

Creamheld Pepito leads the creation of applications and services that fuel the future - modern UIs, paperless, automation/RPA, APIs and micro services at Northwestern Mutual. Leading the pursuit in getting to market faster with quality products leveraging dev/ops and cloud platform services. Chief engineer in defining target architecture and platform health management. Passionate about software engineering maturity and growth.

About Michael Engel

Michael Engel is a consulting industry leader with over two decades of building and leading organizations that support clients in extending, enhancing, enriching, and empowering their organizations in the extraction of genuine business value. Currently focusing on the impact digital labor (robotic process automation, autonomics) can have on both sellers and consumers of services.

About Thomas Young

Thomas Young is currently working on the "next thing" in the sourcing market - Digital Labor. Classic RFP's are too restrictive in today's dynamic environment and buyers and sellers of complex services need to come together in more flexible and sophisticated ways to develop innovative solutions that are profitable for both parties. In order to get the right answers in this fast changing market, you need to ask the right questions. It is critical to ask the right questions, informed with the proper strategic framework, in your go-to-market endeavors. An inquisitive and collaborative go to market approach will yield transformational results.

About Frank Casale

Frank J. Casale is Founder and CEO of the Outsourcing Institute (OI) as well as the Institute for Robotic Process Automation (IRPA). Established in 1993, OI is a global marketplace and community of 70,000+ executive members including leading practitioners, service providers, advisors, thought leaders, industry observers and analysts. The mission of OI is to leverage the collective wisdom and best practices of this evolving outsourcing ecosystem along with the latest abilities of internet technologies to enable powerful alternatives for learning, networking, career development, publishing, transacting and relationship management for those in the outsourcing arena.