Scaling Up Success with Attended Automation

How to unleash the full value of your investment in a technology with transformational potential
The challenge of scale

Intelligent automation is no longer new to the market, and a range of large enterprises have already deployed robotic process automation (RPA) and attended automation technologies in key areas of their business. The technology has proven its value in live deployments beyond pilots and proofs of concept, and attention is now shifting to how organizations can scale up the benefits of their RPA investments.

Many organizations have enjoyed success with RPA deployments for selected processes covering certain parts of the business but have found that it is more difficult than anticipated to drive intelligent automation across their operations on a larger scale. To get this right, enterprises will need to take full ownership over their automation programs by adopting a more strategic approach. According to a Forrester Consulting Study, Commissioned by NICE (The Rise of RPA Will Drive Higher Levels of Business Efficiency, November 2019), 78 percent of business leaders are willing to leverage digital workers or robots for routine tasks while human contact center agents take on more strategic roles. Additionally, almost half (49 percent) of employees surveyed said RPA has removed all or some of the mundane tasks and helped them focus better on their work.

One of the key elements is to look beyond scale in terms of the number of technologies and bots deployed and towards evaluating how successfully the business is leveraging intelligent automation as a transformational technology. It’s not just about how many processes are automated and how many bots are in action, but also about the transformational impact and business value that automation creates.

While defining scale in terms of value is more complex, this forces a rigor around truly transforming processes, addresses the impact on jobs and workforce, and brings a discipline to the deployment of RPA technology. This approach also puts more focus on how automation can be used to augment and complement the human workforce for an all-encompassing approach to intelligent automation.

In this paper, jointly created by NICE and Symphony, we will explore the benefits of attended automation as a critical element of successfully scaling intelligent automation programs. We will also take a look at the steps organizations should take to successfully scale up their intelligent automation efforts to unleash the full return on their investments in this potentially transformational technology.
Tapping into the value of attended automation

Traditional RPA or unattended automation has enjoyed strong adoption among many of the world’s largest government entities, financial services institutions, telecom operators and other organizations with volume-driven processing requirements. Yet many, if not most business processes, in the average mid-sized to larger enterprises, involve tasks and decisions that call upon some human intervention. Attended automation technology helps to bridge this divide by augmenting the capabilities of the human workforce while maintaining the automation of high volumes of repetitive tasks with speed and precision.

Unlike unattended robots that run on backend servers and work on highly structured and repetitive tasks that do not require human judgement or intervention, attended bots live on the employee’s desktop, with the ability to guide the employee in real-time with next best action advice. At the same time, attended bots can also automate certain context specific tasks for the employee in real-time or trigger the unattended workforce to automate additional tasks.

In addition to handling of routine tasks such as copying and pasting information, data input, or sourcing information from multiple data sources and applications, attended bots move beyond the limited functionality of unattended robots. By providing employees with real-time, context relevant links to data and next best-action guidance, attended bots uniquely play a vital role in helping employees to reach their KPI’s and sales targets while continuously adhering to organizational policies and regulations.

Attended automation is thus an effective way to extend automation from the back-office to the front-office, in turn elevating both the scale and the value of the organization’s automation effort.
Moving beyond process automation to augment human talent

Attended Automation surpasses the automation of tasks and exists to amplify human potential and creativity. Since human behavior is dynamic and unpredictable, attended bots require substantially more intelligence to intuitively support and respond to diverse and complex human needs. Attended bots have real-time intelligence, enabling them to give employees contextually relevant guidance and information, as and when needed. This real-time input empowers employees to deliver more engaging, empathetic and memorable customer service experiences during live interactions.

Organizations wishing to achieve flawless operational efficiencies while maintaining very personal, intuitive and memorable customer interactions can only achieve these opposing goals with attended automation. Why? The real-time guidance component prompts employees to interact with customers in the most beneficial way e.g. reading a compliance script or upselling a relevant product to a customer at precisely the right moment. What’s more, attended bots have the intelligence to trigger an entire workforce of unattended bots to execute relevant tasks in the backend. So, there you have it – attended automation fully supports operational efficiencies in the back office right through to the front office with intuitive and memorable customer service experiences.
Multiple value drivers

Without attended automation, it will be difficult for most enterprises to achieve true scale in intelligent automation deployments. Some of the value drivers include:

**Higher levels of employee satisfaction:** Front-line workers can focus less on transactional, process-level tasks on their desktops and more on the work that requires judgment, empathy, and consulting expertise. In addition, employee performance is enhanced and augmented in real-time, since the attended bots work collaboratively with the employees assisting them to reach or even exceed their KPI’s. Augmented employee performance has been proven to drive success and reduce attrition in contact centers and other organizational departments.

**Customer satisfaction:** Engaged, happy employees will deliver better service levels than those bored or frustrated by the work. They will be more attentive and less distracted by administrative tasks, plus they get things done quicker. This adds up to a better customer experience.

**Productivity:** Robots can complete the same desktop tasks faster, letting employees get more done in their working day. The time that is saved can be directed towards value-adding work that enriches the customer experience. The real-time intelligence that attended bots bring to the employee experience also enables more productive and meaningful live customer interactions.

**Accuracy:** Robots are accurate, consistent, and compliant with policies. When they take care of the desktop tasks that humans don’t like and are not as good at, data capture errors and other mistakes are reduced, less time and money is spent fixing these issues, and customers enjoy a more consistent service. The presentation of accurate, relevant and context driven data also enables the employee to provide a more personalized and intuitive service experience to the customer.

**Change management** is an integral part of ensuring scaling success and attended automation supports employees, via the real-time process guidance, to adapt and adjust to new processes and organizational policies.

**Increase in Sales:** Attended bots integrate seamlessly, into any enterprise application, grabbing the most context relevant customer data. A summary of the relevant customer data and promotional offers is presented to the employee instantly, supporting the employee to close a sale in a relevant and efficient manner.

**Compliance adherence:** Compliance scripts are presented to employees through interactive callout screens, in the form of disclaimers which need to be read to the customer. The attended bots also have the capabilities to influence user behavior, for example ensuring that an employee completes every step of a process to remain in compliance (regardless of the order of the steps in the process). Call summary notes are automatically produced, detailing all the actions that took place during the call with the customer. The call summary notes are automatically transferred to the CRM application at the end of the call, leaving an auditable trail. There is also the option to send a fully drafted and customized confirmation e-mail to the customer.

**Reduction in training costs:** The real-time process guidance offers the employees effective on the job training resulting in meaningful and sustainable learning. New recruits can start their new jobs straight away with the reassurance of knowing that they will be guided every step of the way and supplied with all the support materials they need such as scripts, links and built in applications.
4 steps for scaling intelligent automation

There is much more to scaling up an intelligent automation program than deploying a technology and hoping the value rolls in. This is especially the case with attended automation rollouts, because of the human factor they add to the equation.

Attended automation requires different capabilities and infrastructure from RPA in areas such as connectivity options, multi-instance support; UI presentation, central control and monitoring, CPU footprint and data collection for business intelligence.

We have broken down some of the steps enterprises should take and some of the factors they need to consider to successfully drive adoption, deliver value, and manage the associated risks of an attended automation deployment.

1 Strategy

Just as a symphony takes form through sheet music, intelligent automation orchestration manifests itself in a well-thought out strategy. A robust strategy is not a simple document that describes an aspiration – it’s a detailed plan for introducing and scaling automation technologies across the organization.

Such a strategy must answer these questions:

What are we trying to do?
Is the business trying to reduce processing costs for insurance claims? Is it trying to improve turnaround speed for account applications? Or does it want to improve the accuracy of customer data capture?

Why are we trying to do it?
Is the enterprise’s market position threatened due to higher costs than its competitors? Is it wrestling with customer satisfaction concerns? Is the company at risk of fines and audit deficiencies because its control environment is lacking?

Who is going to be involved?
Which parts of the organization are key to success? Who is leading the effort – Operations, IT, a Center of Excellence (CoE)? Will there be governance, and by whom? Will partners be engaged? How will the program leaders engage the broader organization?

How do we identify and measure success?
What are the key indicators and measures for success and how can a process of continuous improvement be implemented?

It takes more than communication to the project team. Organizations that scale their automation programs understand that it takes involvement and cooperation across the organization, approaches that recognize the interconnected nature of operations, and engagement among all involved stakeholders.

2 Decompose, digitize, deliver

Once the enterprise has determined its strategic approach and drivers for attended automation, it’s time to start wrestling with the practicalities of designing and delivering the automations. Three steps to consider are as follows:

Decompose
Don’t take for granted that the way processes are done today is how they should be done in the future. They may include ‘process sediment’ – redundant steps or old ways of doing things that are not needed in an automated environment. Start by breaking down the processes to be automated, then rebuild them with an eye toward efficiency and an “automation-first” design ethic.

Digitize
Identify the right tool to move the work from delivery by a human-based workforce to a virtual-based (or blended) workforce that requires digital input.

Deliver
Work with all stakeholders to design and deliver an orchestration of service between the virtual and digital workforces to improve performance across the targeted measures.
4 steps for scaling intelligent automation

3 Wide versus deep scaling

Organizations can take two approaches to scaling attended automations, or preferably, they can draw on both of them. Wide scaling is often what people are referring to when they talk about scaling automation. As the term implies, it’s about rapidly bringing automation to more processes and functions within the business.

The beauty of wide scaling is that it supports rapid, incremental rollouts in two-week agile sprints, which creates a sense of success and motion. However, the drawback of rapid wide-scaling is that it might not achieve fundamental transformation of the organization and its processes. Much of the process sediment may be left untouched.

Deep scaling focuses on specific processes in designated areas of the business. It involves delving into the process and its data requirements, then fundamentally reshaping the process for a digital world. The benefit is that one can achieve more transformational change through this approach; on the downside, it requires a higher investment of time and money to enable automation development.

Successful scaling generally demands a mixture of both deep and wide scaling. The rapid results delivered by wide scaling help build momentum behind automation efforts in the organization, yield rapid ROI, and help organizations to build their automation capabilities. But deep scaling enables the company to get even higher levels of value by achieving deeper transformation of its processes.

4 Avoid the quick-win syndrome

One of the greatest advantages of RPA is its ability to provide value in a relatively short period of time, as compared to custom coding and other technologies. This benefit of the technology has lulled many organizations to focus too much on the quick win projects that can be identified and implemented in relatively short order.

However, becoming too fixated on speed and ease will limit the value the organization will realize from its investment and inevitably leads to misaligned expectations when leadership is anticipating transformative savings delivered through quick wins. The reality is that quick wins are not always big wins.

Organizations enveloped in the quick win syndrome are often too focused on horizontal scale. They’re only scratching the surface of what is readily available in projects that rarely involve significant changes to the target process. They are mostly taking what is already being done by a human and transferring directly to a virtual employee.

Consider, for example, how automating existing processes may prevent a company from looking at how factors like the dispersion of work across multiple locations results in process variability. As a consequence, any automation may yield fractional savings across multiple locations. A deeper analysis may allow work to be consolidated and standardized in a single location facilitating far greater savings; albeit savings that will require significant organizational change to be realized.

More fundamental transformations are hard to achieve. Filtering through the layers of sediment that builds up on processes over the years takes time and effort. References to contracts that were signed years ago, guidance or audit findings that may have been misread or too conservatively applied, or simply someone’s preference on how to do things - these all build up over time and will not dissipate in a moment.

Intelligent automation can be the driver behind asking the hard questions about the way an organization does its work. It can be uncomfortable; change isn’t easy. But the payoff will be worth the hard work. And it will likely be the level of ROI the C-suite targeted when they decided to embark on the journey in the first place.
Critical success factors for your intelligent automation program

As an organization embarks on an automation program, it needs to understand the business challenges it’s trying to solve, align its strategy with these goals, and ensure that it has the organizational capacity and technical infrastructure to take on a transformational project. Organizations that successfully scale and realize value from automation share the following attributes:

• A relentless operational focus
• An understanding that all change is enabled through people
• Integration of workforce planning and digital labor
• Technical excellence including the capability to deliver complex automation and discipline to appropriately evaluate new technologies
• The ability to deliver against commitments in a complex environment
• Change management competency to enable human workers to adjust to how their roles and responsibilities change as new technologies come into play
• Tight audit and internal controls on the journey to understanding how automation is changing work and processes
• Consideration of how automation programs at scale also intersect with other enterprise initiatives – such as outsourcing

Three tips to streamline the automation journey are as follows:

1. Settle the conversations about segregation of duties between digital and human associates at the start and build the program to scale with those agreed controls.
2. Disaster recovery and business continuity planning become even more critical as an organization increases its dependence on digital labor.
3. If an enterprise is replacing human labor with digital workers, it must have a plan to account for extended system outages or other technical issues that slow or incapacitate the automation fleet.

A Centre of Excellence (CoE) can help lay down the foundation for a successful, large-scale automation program. A CoE is a symbol of an organization’s commitment to process automation. The CoE becomes a magnet for developing and attracting the necessary skills and capabilities. It invites every business operation across the organization to identify needs for optimization and uncover opportunities for increasing efficiency and reducing costs.
Conclusion

An enduring approach to scaling up intelligent automation requires organizations to embrace the multifaceted and holistic value of attended automation, due to the multiple and varied value drivers that it brings. Augmenting employee talent and potential, and intuitively guiding employees through change management interventions are critical elements to ensure successful and sustainable scaling. Lastly, moving beyond RPA to successfully scale, means not just automating for automation’s sake, but truly creating a full operational transformation to build better processes and service experiences.

To learn more about the multiple value drivers of attended automation and how to start your automation transformation – get in touch with one of our automation experts.

About NICE

NICE Ltd (Nasdaq:NICE) is the worldwide leading provider of both cloud and on-premises enterprise software solutions that empower organizations to make smarter decisions based on advanced analytics of structured and unstructured data. NICE Ltd helps organizations of all sizes deliver better customer service, ensure compliance, combat fraud and safeguard citizens. Over 22,000 organizations in more than 150 countries, including over 80 of the Fortune 100 companies, are using NICE Ltd solutions.

About Symphony

Symphony, a SYKES company, is a professional services firm passionate about creating value for the world’s leading organizations by designing, delivering and managing digital business processes. As thought leaders, we have defined a proven methodology for strategic, at-scale deployment of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and Intelligent Automation (IA) solutions that drive results through true digital transformation. Symphony has been named an RPA Service leader by HfS Research for four consecutive years – including being ranked #1 in Delivery of Value for 2018. For more information, visit www.symphonyhq.com and follow the company on LinkedIn or Twitter.

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