

ROBOTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION

Exploring RPA? Here are a few things to consider...

If you have been tracking new trends in technology lately, you've probably heard the term RPA mentioned multiple times. Robotic Process Automation, also known as RPA, is a technology that automates tedious and mundane tasks. While many associate the term RPA with robots on an assembly line, these "bots" are also used to automate tasks performed within a process or workflow such as clicking a button, entering data or downloading forms.

RPA tools have grown exponentially in recent years and continue to gain in adoption. The leader in this space, UiPath, now has a valuation of a mind-blowing \$10B. Other companies such as Blue Prism and Automation Anywhere are not far behind.

With all the hype surrounding RPA, more and more IT leaders are looking at ways to leverage this technology for better efficiencies and cost-savings. If you are exploring RPA for your business, here are a few things to consider.



RPA is only part of the project



Many companies are looking at using these technologies as part of an "RPA project", but in reality, RPA tools should be part of the overall automation project or journey. It's important to step back and think about the problem you are trying to solve. In most cases, there are a few areas within the process that could benefit from applying automation with RPA tools, but there are often other aspects to the project that need to be considered such as integrations, changes to the workflow, data capture and measuring ROI. RPA should be viewed as part of a larger AI and automation journey that might involve other AI/ML technologies and techniques.

ROBOTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION

RPA is brittle



RPA is fragile and can break easily. A high-end sports car is a good analogy. On a smooth road the car runs great, but as soon as it hits bumpy terrain, things get out of alignment and it's back in the shop for a tune up.

With RPA, once everything is up and running, it works like magic. But if there are any slight changes to the user interface or updates to the systems it touches, it breaks. If the system being automated is running slower than usual, workflow timeouts may cause the automation to fail. If a screen is redesigned the automation may fail. If the network is not reliable, the automation may fail. Designing an RPA solution that is tolerant to these types of situation takes some up-front work but can be well worth the investment.

“RPA is a promising new development in business automation that offers a potential ROI of 30%–200% - in the first year”

- Deloitte 2017 Global Shared Services Survey

Significant Value

The biggest attraction to using RPA is the value it brings to your organization. By automating tasks through technology, you are able to realize the following benefits:

- Tasks can now be performed 24 x 7 x 365 compared to 8-hour workdays or multiple shifts
- Humans shift from entering data to validating data for less overhead costs
- Significant increases in capacity and output

ROBOTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION

Cost Structure

Although there is significant value with using RPA, one of the biggest surprises and unknowns is the cost structure. Often times the licensing costs and fees associated with these tools is complex and exceeds expectations which can negatively impact potential ROI.

Bots are licensed, so adding new bots can be costly and is something that needs to be worked into the budget. A worse case understanding of the business process also needs to be factored into the equation. If the automation fails because of a system outage, how many bots are required to catch up? How long will this take and how does it impact the service level you are delivering to your customers?

In addition to the cost of the actual RPA tool, companies will likely also need expertise from an outside firm to properly set up the tools and implement it into their systems and workflows. These costs should also be factored in when estimating the cost of your project.

Not all RPA tools are the same

There are many choices available when it comes to selecting an RPA tool, but it's important to note that not all tools are the same. It ultimately comes down to what is the best fit for your specific project.

You need to make sure you are doing your due diligence when evaluating different RPA tools and make sure they fit your needs and have been applied to similar projects and use cases in the past. Checking a few client references is also key and could be the deciding factor when choosing between your finalists.

Once you have your automation project up and running, it's important to monitor performance and look for areas where you can continue to make improvements. If you were only able to automate 70% of your overall process, aim for reaching 80% next quarter and then 90% during the next. Or maybe you could hit a higher ROI by increasing capacity or by leveraging additional AI/ML technologies for your project. Even "successful" projects can be improved.

Whether you are in the early stages of exploring RPA tools, or further along in your automation journey and could use some guidance, the team at NLP Logix is happy to help. Feel free to reach out to one of our automation experts at sales@nlplogix.com

