

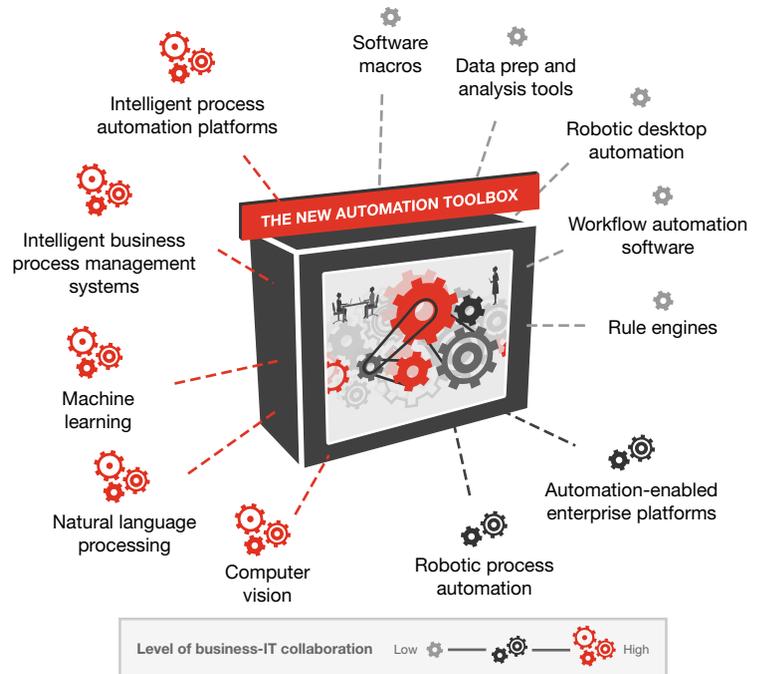
Automation now Straight talk to empower your people and drive business



Admit it: Automation isn't something you're entirely comfortable talking about.

Maybe you don't think it's your job to do so (you're still unclear on what robotic process automation really does). Maybe you don't want to bring up the inevitable workforce implications. Or perhaps you'd rather focus on the glossier aspects of transformation—customer experience, upskilling, digital strategy.

Automation is about all of those things. And every company needs to take a serious look at how they're approaching it, especially as new tools put the power to solve problems and streamline tasks into the hands of business users. But don't start with the technology. Instead, reframe the automation discussion with these five questions and quick takeaways.



1. Do we understand our **business processes** and pain points?

Once you've identified problem areas, determine the approach: Do you want small automation sprints to attack discrete areas? Or do you want to reimagine the process with optimal orchestration between human and digital labor?

Takeaways

- **Take two tracks: fast and forward-looking**
Some tasks will require simple approaches where people train tools to take on repetitive tasks. Others will use AI to automatically optimize processes.
- **Fix problems while finding new value**
Orchestration—reimagining processes through unique combinations of human and digital labor—is the key to unlocking new value while eliminating your pain points.
- **Look across the business**
Back-office functions like finance are often where companies focus their efforts, but there are big gains to be made in automating activities that directly touch customers.



2. Are **people** and culture at the heart of our strategy?

Automation brings big organizational change. The business is constantly evolving, and roles and career paths will be redefined. Leaders can lean on corporate culture, tying the automation agenda to the reasons why people are at the organization in the first place.

Takeaways

- **Fit automation into your culture, not the other way around**
Link automation efforts directly to company values and ways of working. Consider how initiatives help employees better deliver on shared goals.
- **Improve the day-to-day, every day**
Automation will empower people to make continuous improvements. If they are part of the change and see the potential for career growth, they will embrace automation.
- **Revise roles with a purpose**
Automation could affect just about everyone's role, job content, and decision rights. Be transparent about what that means for employees—and provide the upskilling needed to thrive.



3. Will our efforts be sustainable through robust governance?

Defining and implementing a governance framework is pivotal to achieving returns. From technology and data standards to roles and responsibilities, address the tough questions.

Takeaways

- **Develop a framework now**
Even if you are just getting started with pilots, begin addressing company-wide governance that can grow with your ambitions.
- **Begin asking questions**
Consider questions such as: How will you choose your automation projects? Which tools will you make available to business users? How are projects supported and monitored?
- **Balance empowerment and control**
How much autonomy do functions have over automation initiatives and which areas are the domain of your IT organization?



4. How is our tech ecosystem evolving to meet our goals?

While a new class of software lets business users automate tasks relatively quickly, use additional technologies to add intelligence to continually optimize business processes.

Takeaways

- **Resist the urge to lead with tech**
While today's automation toolbox provides plenty of choices, don't jump to the tech. Focus on process challenges, what changes people can expect, and how you'll govern projects.
- **Blend technologies to get the maximum benefit**
Build upon RPA efforts, for example, with more advanced solutions that can automatically learn and optimize processes.
- **Put AI to work**
If there are any doubts about AI's practicality in business today, put them to rest by applying machine learning and natural language processing to solve process challenges.



5. Are we measuring business returns beyond financial ROI?

Taking out costs is only a starting point. For example, if you think about customer experience as a part of every process, then new operating models become possible.

Takeaways

- **Look at more than the bottom line**
Consider measures beyond cost reduction or other financial metrics, such as employee job satisfaction, ability to scale the business without additional people, or enhanced customer service.
- **Consider cost reductions across the organization**
Costs may shift from one spend category to another when processes are automated. Any total reduction must be planned and considered as part of a reallocation of resources.
- **Make data work harder**
From extracting and manipulating structured ERP data to "reading" and understanding unstructured data in emails, consider new opportunities to draw value from data.

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