



| PERSPECTIVE

TO BOT OR NOT TO BE

Taking off on an old Shakespeare line, to write about robotics, may sound strange but is really quite apt. There's an existential question out there for business operations leaders and CIOs.

The rapid evolution, over the last few years, of technologies, platforms and infrastructure have ensured that the reality of automation in business processes is firmly upon us. The changes this will bring to your enterprise will be fast and dramatic. While the opportunities from automation are significant, the dangers of not being in step with it are also significant.

What's happening out there?

Are the bots really taking over? Are the visions of science fiction finally becoming a reality with intelligent robots taking over our lives and work? Is existence of the old way of doing things really under such immediate threat?

In a general sense change is a constant in many industries so this should not come as a surprise. After all, automation has existed for decades now in some shape or form. The software industry has grown so much because software automated previously manual tasks.

Companies, despite their heavy investments in technology and systems, are faced with a unique problem of having their data now residing in so many different systems that they are unable to, in most cases, run a process entirely through any single system. Processes over

the years have got designed around the availability of existing data architectures. So a Procure to Pay process could require employees to access different systems for various stages of RFI and RFP handling, analysis, bidder selection, PO creation, material receipts, inventory, and payments – and as said earlier the process gets built according to these systems and constraints they may pose.

How does it affect my company?

Most companies therefore, over the years, have built fairly large support organizations (often called Shared Services Organization or Global Business Support etc.) and teams that engage themselves for the larger part of their time, in the processing of routine repetitive tasks – in many cases of high volume.

What should my company be doing?

RPA is leading to the next wave of business transformation for global enterprises. Not only are there significant gains in process performance, there will also be far less reliance on human resources to perform the more repetitive, rules based processing tasks. This will mean a quantum gain in process outcomes and significant cost savings.

While function leadership or Lines-of-Business will be the primary driver of RPA adoption and the resultant change, the IT organization too will need to play a central role in the entire RPA strategy and implementation program.

RPA will enable businesses to deliver dramatic results in the cost and customer experience areas. It will enhance competitiveness and drive innovation.

In your executive leadership capacity, you should be actively looking at the areas of your business that can be automated and begin the conversation internally.

The RPA and cognitive automation wave is moving much faster than most people believe. Though there will be the expected teething problems as organisations implement and adapt to the new way of doing things, the relative ease of implementation and the inherent agility of the technologies will drive business gain across the board.

We believe that, for the modern global enterprise, to bot or not to bot is not an existential dilemma, but is an existential imperative.