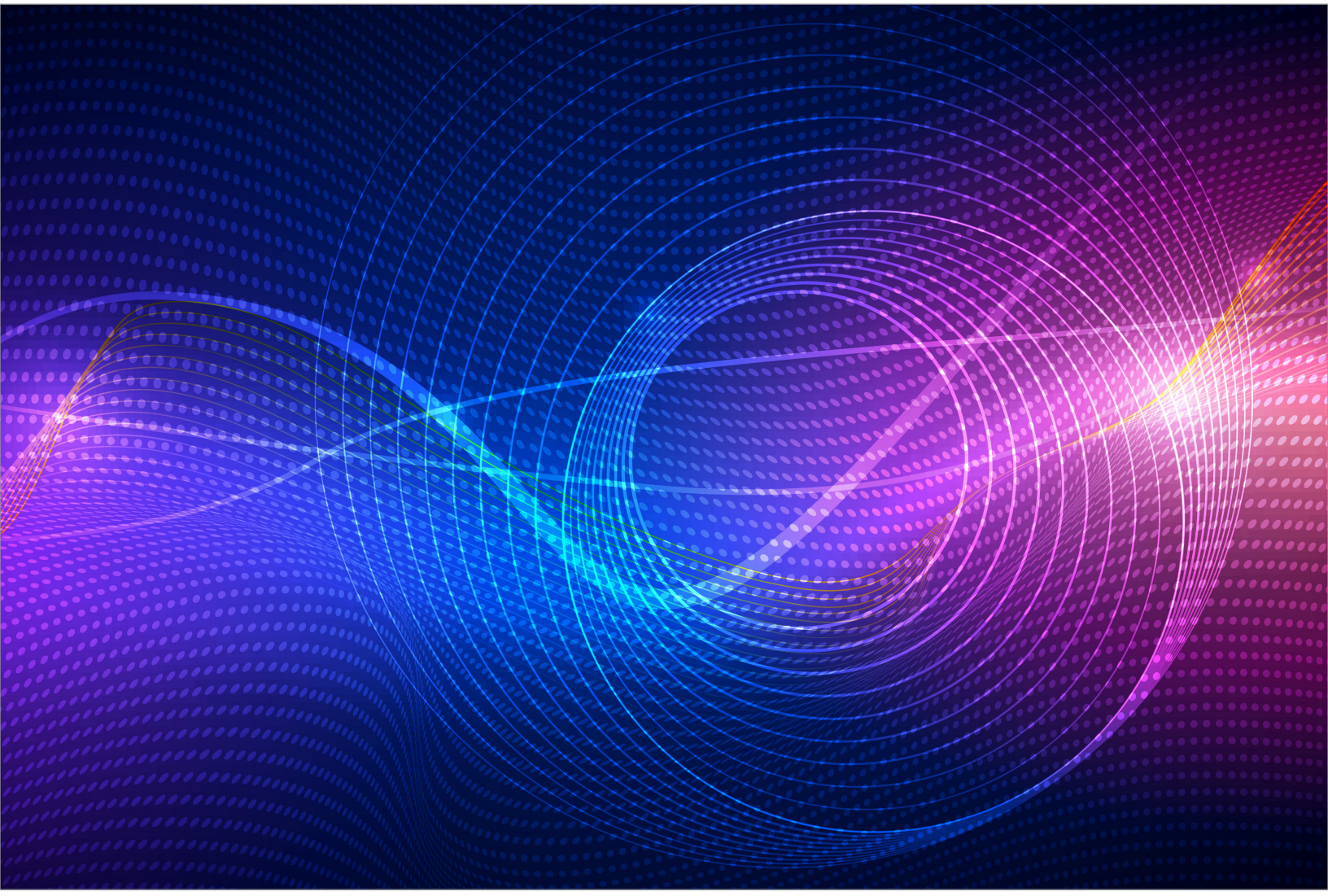
WHITE PAPER

Reducing Blind Spots: Scale Your Organization's RPA Program Faster With Process Intelligence



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Reducing Blind Spots:

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Blind spots. We all have them in multiple areas of our lives. We have figurative blind spots that might render us unable to see another person's point of view, perhaps making a person less empathetic. We also have literal blind spots that can cause ourselves—and others—bodily injury resulting from something we just don't see coming.

But we're not stuck with them. When we pay attention to the blind spots, we can experience amazing results.

Volvo introduced the first blind spot monitoring system—the little orange or yellow light that appears on your side mirrors when a vehicle enters the zone behind your car you can't see—in 2005. Most manufacturers followed suit, and some systems now are sophisticated enough to automatically apply the brakes or steer away from an oncoming car or truck in the next lane. By 2018, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found crash involvement rates in lane-change crashes were 14 percent lower among vehicles with blind spot monitoring than those without, saving thousands of lives.

Robotic process automation (RPA) is a technology that has the power to liberate tens of millions of workers from manual tasks and put them on the interstate to more creative destinations. But it does have its blind spots. That's why so many enterprises are using process intelligence as a monitoring system for RPA, helping them avoid so many of the "accidents" that occur on the road to an automation program that has reached scale.

RPA: Fast Growth Leads to Growing Pains

According to Gartner, spending on RPA grew 38.9 percent year-over-year in 2020 to nearly $2 billion worldwide[1]. The Stamford, Connecticut-based consulting giant called it the fastest-growing segment in enterprise software—a segment that was virtually non-existent five years earlier.

Growth in the segment, however, has not always translated into scale for individual organizations trying to implement automation strategies. Cambridge, Massachusetts-based consultancy Forrester famously estimated that more than 50 percent of businesses that had implemented RPA had failed to put more than 10 bots into production[2].

The pandemic year of 2020 saw a huge surge in RPA and intelligent automation adoption, but achieving scale still remained elusive for most. While 2020 saw slight improvement over the pre-pandemic years of 2019 and 2018, only 13 percent of businesses using RPA implemented more than 50 bots last year[3].

1. Market Share Analysis: Robotic Process Automation, Worldwide, Gartner, May 2021
2. Forrester Wave: Robotic Process Automation Services, Q4 2019, Forrester, Oct. 2019
3. Automation with Intelligence: Pursuing Organization-Wide Reimagination, Deloitte, Nov. 2020

Gaining Visibility with Process Intelligence

So, what is holding organizations back from being able to fully leverage one of the most important technologies developed in the past decade? In a word: visibility.
Process intelligence has become an indispensable component of any RPA strategy because it enables businesses to perceive what isn't immediately evident, according to Richard Rabin, product marketing manager for ABBYY Timeline.

"How do you understand in advance what is worth automating—what will make it truly useful? How does an automated task affect the overall process it's part of? The obvious answers," Rabin explains, "are that, despite all the benefits of RPA, when you add it together with the ability to monitor, control, and understand the overall process the RPA bots are a part of, it results in a superior customer experience. Having that enhanced vision reduces risk, improves compliance, and allows you to optimize so many aspects of operational excellence."

Eliminating blind spots requires a holistic view of the tasks to be automated, the processes the tasks comprise, and the multiple systems an automation must leverage to be effective. Process intelligence is the means to acquire that view.

Process Intelligence vs. Process Mining

Process mining was the first term popularized to describe the function of identifying business processes within an organization that would benefit from automation. The initial blind spot many businesses encounter on an automation journey is simply identifying tasks or processes that make sense to automate. The first one (or several) typically are readily apparent. Subsequently, they're not so easy to spot.

Process mining, however, is only a small component of overall process intelligence. True visibility comes from the synergies found between RPA, task mining, process mining, and overall process intelligence. Those synergies begin with monitoring the workstations of individuals and recording how the person completes certain tasks and processes—classic process mining.

But process intelligence—as executed by the ABBYY Timeline platform—takes the monitoring process to a completely different level. It records multiple desktops and multiple employees performing different processes at different stages of an organization's RPA deployment. From these varied inputs, it renders a visual, dynamic model of those processes and then provides the tools to analyze them, make predictions, and take action in real time where needed.

"And in that way," Rabin notes, "you're not just seeing one path from one employee who does things in one way. You're getting the process as understood by many people at different levels of experience and getting much better visibility into

what is actually occurring. It's the idea of sitting outside the multiple systems and the multiple tasks that are involved, being able to watch over the entire distributed business process."

And, because that holistic view eliminates the blind spots, it becomes easy to note and remediate any problem that arises. By using process intelligence with an extended set of tools, a company can evaluate the effectiveness of its RPA technology by revealing not just by the time it takes to do something but the complexity of a task, process, or set of processes.

Intelligence Promotes Scale

Companies at the beginning stages of RPA initiatives are most at risk of blind spots. Inexperience sometimes leads to choosing to automate processes that are too complex. Process intelligence tools can chart complexity versus gain to optimize choice. It's not always easy to understand which processes, even if they are automated successfully, would actually contribute with sufficient ROI. Process intelligence enables organizations to compare processes and choose the ones that have the most significant impact on time and cost.

Once these problems are solved, they provide your business with the visibility that makes it easier to scale your RPA program. As businesses add bots and address different processes, workflows inevitably change. Continuous monitoring and alerts allow companies to more easily add more automation, and produce more data, resulting in a greater ability to forecast problems.

"Having the automation as a part of a larger process intelligence framework really has a lot of benefits. As we're watching over this distributed environment, we can be pulling data from all the different systems and automations that are cooperating," Rabin says. "That allows us to forecast issues and take action before they become big problems."

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> -Richard Rabin, Product Marketing Manager, ABBYY Timeline

Evaluating Process Intelligence Technology in the Real World

Theoretically, the case for adopting a process intelligence tool seems airtight. But, as always, resources are finite, and corporate priorities do not always allow for investment in new technology—even if it makes sense.

Michelle Hannan-Brown is leading the RPA journey for New Zealand's flag carrier airline, Air New Zealand. As senior manager of the company's RPA Center of Excellence, she has been tasked with quickly identifying business processes that are fit for automation and delivering them rapidly into production.

Hannan-Brown acknowledges that a process intelligence tool was not a priority when spinning up Air New Zealand's RPA program, but the need soon became clear.

"Initially, the focus for me was to upskill the existing team and ensure the internal processes we were using to move from discovery, build, deploy were as efficient and as repeatable as possible and growing the brand of the team," Hannan-Brown explains. "Once we had a really good proposition to offer out to the business, the focus turned to being able to deliver the best value work as quickly as possible, and that's when you start to notice how mature or immature your business is regarding process."

For Hannan-Brown, advancing that maturity will include acquiring a process intelligence tool and evaluating providers along three crucial dimensions.

Documentation: How well can a provider document and map processes enabling identification and deeper understanding? Technology should be able to provide insights into individual current processes and prioritize improvements.

Interaction: Standard process maps will help you understand a process but not how it relates to other processes, systems, or the wider business environment. If you are trying to achieve the best results with process automation, you need to have clarity of how the individual automations you are delivering impact the overall process value stream.

Experimentation: Test the software with some of your company's data. This not only enables you to see how the solution interacts with your data but will also start to expand your thinking about the ways the software may be useful within your organization. Test versions or sandpit environments where your team can interact and use the software provide valuable insights for key decision makers and create excitement and energy with business users who will need to be comfortable using and promoting the software internally.

Conclusion

Often, the business processes that enable an organization to function are opaque. While it is fairly simple initially to identify obvious manual processes that would benefit from automation, it is not always easy to progress beyond that, even if there are more opportunities to become more productive, more efficient, and reduce costs.

RPA has proven to be a transformative technology, but it has its blind spots. What do my processes actually look like? Which are the most suitable for automation? Are there bottlenecks? What and where are they? How do I capture the right data about them? After I automate, how do I track and measure performance?

Process intelligence enables organizations to gather and analyze the data generated by business processes, shine light on those blind spots, and turn that intelligence into insight and action.

About RPA Today

RPA Today℠ is the independent voice of one of the fastest-growing sectors in digital transformation for businesses. Our Robotic Process Automation℠ publication, covers this billion-dollar industry in the midst of unprecedented growth. RPA Today charts the technology's continued progress with original content covering the people, companies, trends and stories that light the path for participants in a brand new space.

We strive to serve every constituency in the RPA ecosystem from end-users to software providers to technology partners to consultants. We stand apart from these stakeholders with a mission to provide them objective and trusted news, information, and education vital to growth in a nascent space.

RPA Today represents decades of combined expertise in automation, technology, content creation and B2B media. Our experienced staff provides comprehensive, consistent and ongoing coverage of the exploding intelligent automation, hyper automation, AI, & RPA market.

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About ABBYY

ABBYY is a Digital Intelligence company. We provide a Digital Intelligence platform that enables organizations to gain a complete understanding of their business. The platform is designed to allow organizations to deploy solutions in standalone configurations or as a tightly integrated extension of industry-leading RPA, BPM and packaged application solutions.

ABBYY technologies are used by more than 5,000 companies, including many of the Fortune 500 in finance, insurance, transportation and logistics, healthcare and other industries. ABBYY is recognized as a market leader in Intelligent Document Processing (IDP) and Process Discovery & Mining for driving impact where it matters most: customer experience, effectiveness, profitability and competitive advantage.

ABBYY has a worldwide presence with Headquarters in the United States and offices in 14 countries, including Germany, UK, France, Spain, Russia, Cyprus, Ukraine, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Hungary, Australia, and Japan. For more information, visit www.abbyy.com/company.