

ROBOTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE IMPACTS ON EMPLOYEE SKILLS

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- ROBOTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION (RPA)
- PROBLEM STATEMENT
- RESEARCH OBJECTIVE
- METHODS
- FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS
- CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) (1 of 3)

Definition

the use of technology that enables employees of a company to configure the computer or 'robot' software to capture and interpret existing applications to process transactions, manipulate data, and communicate with other digital systems.

Definition

a business process automation system that uses software tools to interact with existing applications and replace humans.

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) (2 of 3)

Market Size

The global RPA market size is estimated at USD 6.81 billion by 2026, and the technology is expected to have an Annual Compound Growth Rate of 22.3% (Fortune Business Insights, 2020)

Benefits

Enhancement of productivity to the organization, minimizing the costs in terms of reducing employee engagement, improving the accuracy and speed of work processes, reducing human negligence issues and increasing organizational competitiveness (Lacity & Willcocks 2015a; Lacity, Willcocks & Craig 2016d).

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) (3 of 3)

Benefits

eliminate repetitive tasks, processes and sub-processes, and in turn, it can make workers less burdened by less work.

Effects

- employees can focus on higher-value work
- it creates a need for different skills as workers now have to work with robots and they may have additional tasks or job changes.
- will create new roles for employees

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The implementation of new technology is not always an appropriate action. This is because investing in technology may also lead to new problems and greater complexity in the work process. The implementation of new technology can have an adverse effect on the organization due to the elimination of some works and positions (Lacity & Willcocks 2017; Lacity & Willcocks 2015). Employees who have lost a particular job or positions, and have been reassigned to another job, have the potential to become less productive, which will have an impact on the organization (Willcocks, Lacity & Craig 2015).



RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

To understand the impacts of RPA on employee skills in the finance and accounting unit.

METHODS

Qualitative approach – in-depth case study in one of the world largest oil and gas company in the world.

Purposive sampling - which involves selection of individuals or company that are considered to be proficient and well-informed with the implementation of RPA in GBS industry

Semi structured interviews- with various respondents that are involved in the implementation process of RPA system in finance and accounting unit.

DETAILS OF INTERVIEWS

	Name and Position	Interview Session	
		Frequency	Duration (Hour)
1	Vice President of Finance and Accounting Unit	1	1
2	Vice President of Revenue Unit	2	3
3	Human Resource Manager	1	2
4	Operational Manager	2	4
5	Team Manager 1	1	1
6	Team Manager 2	1	2
7	Finance Operation Specialist 1	1	2
8	Continuos Improvement Manager 1	1	1.5
9	Continous Improvement Manager 2	1	1
10	Continous Improvement Manager 3	1	1
11	Finance Operation Specialist 2	1	1.5
12	System Control Manager	1	1.5
13	Finance Operation Specialist 3		
	TOTAL		21.5 HOURS

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Value-Added Skills

Workers now have more time to do value-added work (Lacity & Willcocks 2016; Kumar & Balaramachandran 2018).

Therefore, with the help of robotics, employees in the finance and accounting unit are now able to do more intelligent work that adds value. This not only benefits the organization but also enriches the work that this profession does.

"... That's why I think we need automation to do all the basic work or repetition work so if we want to take the time to do the analysis, we have time for that. Otherwise, everyone says that they are busy because from the morning they have been tied to various tasks. They don't have time for other tasks they want to do but then, if we automate their work and we save their time, then they can actually do more value-added tasks..."

(Team Manager 2)

"... So when we deploy robots, it frees our employees from doing regular, repetitive tasks and it actually allows them to do more value-based assessments or assignments. This is best for them as they do not spend time at their desks doing data entry all day. This robot was able to complete the time-consuming tasks we had always wanted to accomplish but could not perform due to resource constraints..."

(Continuous Improvement Manager 1)

Analytical Skills

The highlight of the integration of RPA in organizations is enabling the workforce to engage and focus more on analytical tasks.

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"... the point is that it saves individuals time on assignments and redirects their time to a more analytical type of job. Their job is to no longer simply attach supporting documents and print out a PDF invoice. However, what this team can do now is actually is to focus on the front process and review the quality of the requests they receive before processing them. This is really a necessary step in the process and now they have more time to do it because parts of those steps are now being done by robots..."

(System Control Manager)

"... we really need to be more analytical. My job now is all about numbers and also not about numbers. So if I was just doing a book-based assignment or just looking at their cash flow, then I might lose other information..."

(Finance Operation Specialist 1)

Interpersonal Skills

RPA enables humans to focus on work that requires judgment, creativity, and interpersonal skills rather than on routine processes.

New tasks due to the RPA implementation are now making the finance and accounting profession not only need accounting skills, but they are now expected to have other interpersonal skills.

Some tasks actually required more interpersonal skills rather than accounting skills.

"...you need to have really good interpersonal skills because you'll be talking to customers, you'll be talking to other stakeholders..."
(Finance Operation Specialist 1)

"Skill-wise you also need non-technical skills like, you know, interpersonal skills, all those skills that are not obtained in degree. So, that's like, book-smart and street-smart, so you must also have a bit of both as a balance, yeah."
(Finance Operation Specialist 1)

"I would say people skills, managing expectation of your customers, managing expectations of your credit managers, your business stakeholder. For example, the sales team. If they have found a new customer, they will be chasing after you to approve the customer's application, right? So, it's a lot of like managing people and people's expectations. Not so much on the detailed accounting standards or accounting knowledge here."
(Continuous Improvement Manager 2)

Computer and IT Skills

Computer and IT skills are vital due to the task shifting in the finance and accounting profession. Finance and accounting work is no longer performed manually. Whether they like it or not, they have to work together with computers and technology. Humans are needed for data analysis and it requires them to be able to work well with the robots.

"...You need to have really good computer skills in order for you to work along with the robots and to manage the data..."
(Finance Operation Specialist 1)

"...we then expect this person to understand a bit more technology if the robot stops working for any reason, this person needs to understand what happened and how to mitigate it..."
(Operational Manager)



Finance and Accounting Skills

Robots still cannot replace the needs of human resources completely. Humans are still needed for tasks that require human judgment and more complex, and hence it is vital for them to still have the finance and accounting skills.

"Yes, you still need it, yes, because automation can only do so much. You will still need to implement or apply all this knowledge for the higher-level tasks that robots won't be able to do for you."

(Finance Operation Specialist 1)

"So, I still think that it's very important that people have the relevant finance and accounting skillsets and I still think that in the majority of roles that we have within Finance Operations that people do their professional accounting qualifications. That is absolutely not going to change as a result of RPA."

(Continuous Improvement Manager 1)

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

- This study showed that the employees in the finance and accounting unit will need to focus on value-added tasks such as strategy development, new service design, and rich social interaction with internal and external customers.
- RPA management and governance requires different thinking skills (Deloitte, 2017; Seasongood, 2016; Willcocks, Lacity & Craig, 2015a). Therefore, it also shows how important it is for employees to have information technology knowledge for their involvement in the RPA implementation process (Asatiani & Penttinen 2016). In addition, RPA themselves can create jobs such as robot management and consulting in the long run (Asatiani & Penttinen 2016). If they do not have these skills, it is a good time for management to rethink strategies for talent development (Lacity & Willcocks 2016).
- It is important for accountants to learn to read and edit RPA codes so that they can work with the IT team to configure RPAs and know how to control RPAs especially in the event of system failures.
- This study also found that RPA could change the finance and accounting profession stigma when it helps to make the work in this profession becomes more interesting and provide the worker with a more enriching experience.

THANK YOU

