

ALL THINGS DIGITAL

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ACCELERATING THE AUTOMATION JOURNEY

Many companies are leveraging automation to achieve remarkably productive outcomes, but most firms find themselves in the pre-automation phase, or with only a few automations that deliver only minimal value. Recent studies have confirmed a large number of companies are in the very early stages of automation.

Why is this?

Accelerating the automation journey requires commitment, structure, discipline and a culture that is open to change. Without these, organizations stall.

Commitment. If your firm is not committed to reaping the benefits of automation, it will struggle to scale. Initiatives will be underfunded, organizations will be understaffed, and everyone will have something more important to do. This is why commitment must start at the top with board- and CEO-level commitment. Anything less will result in sub-optimal behavior that can erode your automation program.

Structure. Accelerating the automation journey requires strategy and governance. An automation strategy describes a plan of action and can be used to gain consensus and alignment. An automation governance framework should take into account the demand for automations as well as the supply of resources and capabilities available to satisfy that demand. It should help an organization align its automation initiatives with corporate strategy, prioritize work and handle conflicting priorities. Without governance, chaos reigns.

Discipline. A successful automation program has the discipline to set standards and follow them. If every automation practitioner follows his or her own standard, the resulting automations will be difficult to operate and maintain. Variation is the enemy of scaling your automation journey. When people know there are a common set of solutions and methods – and when they follow them religiously – the organization will see an accelerating effect.

A culture that is open to change. Accelerating your automation journey requires a new way of thinking. Often, automation is considered a threat – a threat to individuals, to organizations and to entire functional units within a corporation. This is why organizational resistance to change is the greatest impediment to automation. People need to understand the benefits of automation

and how those benefits will affect them. They need to learn how automation can take the drudgery out of certain processes and make way for more meaningful work that delivers value to the company. A culture that is open to change will also be more likely to take advantage of automating more than just back-office processes. While it's important to maximize the efficiency and productivity of back-office operations, other revenue-generating opportunities represent a huge potential for automation. In fact, front-office automation is the fastest growing area for automation. Call centers are amplifying the effectiveness of agents with automation tools that anticipate and provide real-time information to yield better customer experiences and increased sales. A culture that is open to change is also more likely to question the prevailing thought that systems and processes must be improved before they can achieve the goals of automation. Many automations are the result of optimizing what you have to quickly deliver real value. Waiting on process and system improvement can inhibit acceleration. Often, we find the return on investment for automation far exceeds that of business process reengineering.

In addition to these principles, accelerating the automation journey depends on a high-performing Center of Excellence (CoE). Properly planned and executed, a CoE provides oversight and management for the automation program and supports and sustains the necessary commitment, structure, discipline and open mind for achieving your automation goals.



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