

5 Steps to Successful RPA Implementation with Process Intelligence



Stricter regulations, the increasing cost of labor, and pressures to improve customer satisfaction through increased speed of delivery are causing organizations to rethink the way they do business. How can a business respond to all of these pressures while still remaining profitable?

At its core, a business is made up of its processes. These processes can either create value or serve as a roadblock to meet increasing expectations. More than just a nuisance, repetitive tasks are becoming toxic blocks to profitability and success. As competition and customer demands increase, the need for organizations to become more agile will drive the need to find solutions to streamline processes and improve efficiency to remain successful.

Unfortunately, there are tedious tasks in every business, whether it's purchase-to-pay, invoice processing, or even something like assessing vendors. Traditionally, outsourcing has allowed companies to cut costs and improve efficiency for their support activities, but this is no longer enough of an advantage. Instead, automation of these tedious tasks has become the new industry standard to deliver the speed and quality that customers expect.

Automation has advanced in a way that allows for these tedious tasks to be addressed by implementing digital workers that do the work, freeing employees, which in turn allows for a boost in productivity and creativity in the workplace. Automation has also proven to deliver large reductions in costs.

Ernst & Young estimates that automating a manual process can result in the reduction of cost by 25 to 40 percent.*

Despite this technology having been around for a few years and its large benefits, many companies are just starting their process automation journeys.

The process of starting an automation project can seem daunting. How do you decide which process to automate? How do you know which benefits to expect? What risks can you expect during pre- and post-implementation? All of these questions can seem impossible to answer with quantifiable responses. Knowing that nearly half of all robotic process automation (RPA) initiatives fail, how can you ensure that you'll have success? The answers to these questions don't require months of manual effort, sheer luck, or a sixth sense.

Instead, when companies employ a process-first approach to their automation efforts, the chances of success skyrocket. The benefits of using process intelligence work hand-in-hand with your RPA initiative, from planning all the way through monitoring success post-implementation.

Successful process re-engineering with RPA and ABBYY Timeline

A successful RPA initiative is not based on the RPA vendor alone. It takes complementary technologies to fully plan the initiative to ensure for downstream success. By adding the strengths of a process intelligence platform like ABBYY Timeline to your automation efforts, your organization can improve the likelihood of success in your automation journey. Timeline is your companion through the entire process of your automation journey, helping with tasks that range from selecting the right process to automate all the way to monitoring performance post-implementation.

Although Timeline can help your organization in many different ways, there are five critical best practices in which it can help ensure RPA success:



1 Ensure that there are benefits to automation

The overall goal of investing in automation is to streamline a process. However, like all business decisions, the benefits need to outweigh the potential costs, especially in something like RPA, where there can be large startup costs. But how can you quantify the benefits of automating your process?

With ABBYY Timeline by your side, you can use tools like Cost and Bottleneck Analysis to ensure that the time and cost of automating a specific process is worth it. **By using these pre-built tools, you can quickly sort to see which steps in your process occur with the most frequency, the average time each step takes, the total time spent doing each step across all processes, and the percentage of total process time each step takes up.** Additionally, through Cost Analysis, you can easily see how much money a specific process costs. All of these components are essential for selecting what to automate.

Without full insight, you may not be selecting the right task to automate. Typically, a company will select a task that occurs the most frequently because it appears to be the lowest-hanging fruit. However, they may ignore opportunities to automate tasks that occur with less frequency but offer better ROI opportunities.

This means it is essential that you have a comprehensive understanding of all of the impacts of the process before starting your automation efforts. With this information in hand, it makes prioritizing RPA initiatives more quantifiable and allows you to make the best selection sooner based on data-backed insights.

2 Reduce risk

There are large risks associated with RPA implementation. Half of all automation efforts fail. Why? Too often the full process and all the downstream effects were never completely understood before starting the initiative.

There is a natural tendency to think that business processes are straightforward especially when viewing them from a high level. This is why many people will go to RPA vendors saying, “I have a repetitive task I want to automate.” However, before they know it, they find that there are exceptions to the task that require additional review and oversight. This could be something as simple as an extra step required if someone lives in a certain state, but typically there are many other exceptions.

Because RPA simply follows a set of rules rather than thinking for itself, all instances in the task need to be accounted for and understood.

When you start adding a large number of exceptions, the RPA platform either will have to be coded with complicated variants that require a significant investment or simply will not work, at least not in the way that you expect. Even if the company does decide to proceed with creating complicated strings of code for the bot, it is likely that the maintenance of upkeeping the logic behind the bots will outweigh their expected benefits shortly after initial implementation—for example, if the exceptions continue to grow or change.

Because of this, **before starting an RPA initiative, take a step back, evaluate closely your current business process, and ensure that your processes are standardized and are a good fit for RPA.** Timeline process intelligence technology helps you to understand the real as-is state of your processes.



3 Use process understanding as a framework for RPA development

Because RPA follows a set of preconfigured rules built into its code, a human needs to create the set of steps that the bot will follow. Traditionally, it has been resource intensive to create a guide for the steps the automation will need to follow. This can be done via observation, interviews, and data modeling. However, these practices are not only costly, but usually miss out on the true process execution. These manual observations are all too often subjective and biased, which leads to inaccurate reporting on process execution. It then takes numerous repetitions of automation trial and error before arriving at the final version, which is not only costly but also time consuming.



With ABBYY Timeline, process data is saved into the cloud when it is uploaded onto the platform. **This means that the process data and all of its insights are available anytime, anywhere, for anyone.** The process data can be exported in a business process management (BPM) format that can then be used as a blueprint for your digital workforce. Having 100 percent transparency into process execution and viewing the as-is process can assist in building out RPA faster and achieving more efficiency, enabling a greater likelihood of success.

4 Enable closed-loop automation

Once you have implemented automation across your business, it is likely that not all of your bots will be in use on a day-to-day basis or across all processes. The reason may be that the bot is only triggered in a very specific instance. Unless there is a sophisticated ability to plan, track, and monitor process behaviors, you will need something like Timeline that is able to detect specific conditions and alert employees to issues in real time. Otherwise, you will have to rely on manual efforts to review and monitor execution post-implementation.

With webhook capability linked to Timeline's monitoring tools, digital workers can be spawned to remediate and fix issues in real time. Additionally, you can have alerts sent to your phone or email to let you know that the bots have been triggered and are working as planned. This removes the need to fix issues manually and allows the digital workers to perform free from human intervention.

With all these features in mind, Timeline is the first and only platform that can provide closed-loop integration where your Process Intelligence tool monitors your operational platforms, sends an alert when a special condition occurs, triggers the remedy, then verifies the problem is actually solved. With prediction and forecasting, you can identify potential issues and trigger remedies before negative events ever occur. **This is truly intelligent automation.**

5 Ensure real-time monitoring and alerting of your hybrid workforce

Just because the bots are in place does not mean your RPA project is over. Monitoring the digital workforce as well as the entire end-to-end process post-implementation is just as essential as the planning and execution. As reported by Ernst & Young, it is this stagnation post-implementation that contributes to the failure in many RPA initiatives.*

RPA, once implemented, will continue to act based on the set of rules that it was coded for. The bot has no concept of whether it is creating good or bad outcomes. Therefore, it is important that someone monitor the overall performance and ensure positive outcomes. No, that doesn't mean that someone needs to watch a dashboard waiting to respond to a bad outcome.

With ABBYY Timeline, through monitoring and alerting capabilities, you can be alerted in real time if there are any issues with your automation efforts. Timeline does the work for you. Whether you would like to be notified via text or email, you can be notified in real time so that you can work on finding a solution faster.

In addition, Timeline's side-by-side analysis capability allows for you to view your pre- and post-implementation results next to each other to see how it really has transformed your business. What's different about Timeline is that it not only monitors the health of the automated part of the process, but also the health of the entire process. **RPA does not just affect one part of the process, but rather the entire process, so it is important to monitor the changes that occur.** Whether there is a shift in the bottleneck or change in your process completely post-implementation, it is important to be able to have the visibility to understand your entire process and pursue continuous improvement.

Summary

ABBYY Timeline process intelligence gives enterprises the ability to understand “as-is” process states for a more complete picture to view process execution in the context of time, rather than through snapshots. The solution also aggregates process data easily and cost-effectively across disparate systems and reconstitutes it as an interactive model—a process digital twin.

Timeline helps provide a seamless implementation that leads to business process re-engineering that saves your business not only time, but also money. It takes more than a handful of RPA bots to demonstrate real enterprise automation successes worth bragging about. Timeline paired with your RPA initiative enables successful, sustainable, and enterprise-wide automation. Process Intelligence has become an essential step of RPA implementation. Without it, you are unable to identify and prioritize opportunities, reduce risk, account for all instances, trigger bots, monitor, or alert. Starting with process intelligence guarantees for a smoother, more cost-effective RPA implementation for the life of your automation project.



[*https://www.ey.com/en_gl/financial-services-emeia/get-ready-for-robots](https://www.ey.com/en_gl/financial-services-emeia/get-ready-for-robots)

The time to start is now. Want to learn more about how ABBYY Process Intelligence can help with your automation efforts? Visit www.abbyy.com/timeline for more information.



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