

MARKET NOTE

AARI: Automation Anywhere's Ambitious Attempt at Improving Automation Accessibility Across the Enterprise

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EXECUTIVE SNAPSHOT

FIGURE 1

Executive Snapshot: AARI: Automation Anywhere's Ambitious Attempt at Improving Automation Accessibility Across the Enterprise

As part of Automation Anywhere Innovation Day 2020, the vendor unveiled a personal digital assistant called Automation Anywhere Robotic Interface (AARI). This IDC Market Note explores the significance of the announcement and the capabilities that differentiate AARI from solutions currently available in the market.

Key Takeaways

- Automation Anywhere has positioned AARI as a personal digital assistant in the workplace, akin to what Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri are in users' personal lives. The intent is to provide a seamless, natural, and conversational user experience (UX) in the context of the workplace, greatly simplifying and optimizing user interactions with the applications and systems that support their functional roles.
- From an end user's perspective, AARI presents itself as a collection of custom-created workflows or processes relating to specific use cases encountered by the user in their functional roles. Once the workflows are designed and packaged in the Process Editor, users can access these workflows through a web-based request handling interface that provides near-universal location/device-agnostic access to AARI's capabilities.
- AARI's ability to bring together the simplicity of natural conversational interaction from within an application and use an interface of the user's choice, including a single-pane view with bidirectional data exchange with multiple systems and an automated and transparent-to-user invocation of robots, is unique and differentiated.
- Although AARI can be deployed meaningfully in both front- and middle-/back-office environments, its deployment as a digital assistant, which brings the power of intelligent automation to the front office, provides the best articulation of its value proposition.

Source: IDC, 2020

IN THIS MARKET NOTE

As part of Automation Anywhere Innovation Day 2020, the intelligent automation vendor unveiled a personal digital assistant called Automation Anywhere Robotic Interface (AARI). This IDC Market Note explores the significance and potential implications of the announcement.

IDC'S POINT OF VIEW

Overview

The robotic process automation (RPA) solutions provider Automation Anywhere unveiled the Automation Anywhere Robotic Interface (AARI) as part of its premier online virtual event Innovation Day 2020. In fact, it is enough to say that AARI, touted as a personal digital assistant, was the flagship announcement of the event.

Automation Anywhere CEO Mihir Shukla set the stage for AARI's introduction by making a pointed comparison between the convenience of personal digital assistants, such as Amazon's Alexa or Apple's Siri in the personal lives of people, and the lack of something similar in the professional setting, likening it to being stuck in the 1990s. AARI is intended to provide a similarly seamless, natural, and conversational user experience (UX) in the context of the workplace, greatly simplifying and optimizing both front- and back-office operations.

At its core, AARI intends to deliver "frictionless automation" within an enterprise by providing a simple and intuitive way to interact efficiently with the diversity of systems and applications that an employee needs to execute their functional responsibilities. AARI delivers this operational simplicity through a series of interrelated mechanisms:

- Presenting a bespoke single form/screen interface for easy bidirectional data exchange between the business user and multiple individual applications, platforms, and systems
- Providing a simple and convenient way to launch purpose-specific bots as part of an automated workflow orchestration within AARI
- Integrating with popular software-as-a-service (SaaS) applications, including Salesforce, Google Sheets, and Microsoft Excel, allowing AARI to be invoked directly from within these applications
- Allowing seamless incorporation of a human-in-the-loop (HITL) model to handle approvals, escalations, and exceptions

Although RPA is well-adopted in middle- and back-office operations, particularly those processes and tasks that are amenable to rule-based batch processing, the adoption of automation solutions in front-office environments has always lagged a bit in comparison with other environments. Although AARI can be deployed meaningfully in both front- and middle-/back-office environments, its deployment as a digital assistant, which brings the power of intelligent automation to the front office, is what sets it apart from existing solutions. Automation Anywhere expects AARI to play a big role in reusing existing automation as part of different workflows. Toward that end, Automation Anywhere showcased use cases and customer examples for the use of AARI in front-office operations, such as loan request processing and authorization, automation of a variety of operational tasks at bank branches, and so on. The vendor also highlighted significant increases in employee productivity and customer satisfaction among customers currently using the solution.

Under the Hood

From an end user's perspective, AARI presents itself as a collection of custom-created workflows or processes relating to specific use cases encountered by the user in their functional role. The workflow is designed in the Process Editor, which brings together custom forms, purpose-specific bots, and requisite business logic that comprise the process. The Process Editor features the same visual building capabilities present in Enterprise A2019, removing the need for any additional learning or reskilling. Once the workflows are designed and packaged, users can access them through a web-based request handling interface that provides near-universal location/device-agnostic access to AARI's capabilities.

Although AARI can be deployed and operationalized in a citizen development regime, it is probably most meaningful to design and manage AARI workflows under a strong center of excellence (COE)-driven development and governance model to ensure that the capabilities can be optimally leveraged. This will allow for development and deployment of standardized and optimized digital assistants for different functional roles and work groups, contrary with an enterprise AARI deployment potentially turning into an innovative but ultimately suboptimal initiative. Toward that end, AARI provides for team management capabilities, allowing managers granular control over assignment of processes to teams and management of usage rights.

On the operational front, although AARI is priced at US\$35 per user every month, the meaningful use of its capabilities presumes availability of bot creator licenses to create workflows that will be part of AARI and bot runner licenses for individual bots that are invoked from within AARI workflows. AARI is available for purchase today, and according to the vendor, it will be part of the Automation Anywhere Community Edition by the end of the year.

In Conclusion

AARI differentiates itself in the way it brings together a host of useful capabilities: providing the user the simplicity of natural conversational interaction from within an application, presenting a single-pane view with bidirectional data exchange with multiple systems, and enabling automated and transparent-to-user invocation of robots. IDC believes that the next logical step for Automation Anywhere's evolution with AARI will be to expand the universe of enterprise apps that AARI natively integrates into (and can be invoked from). Finally, customers will welcome AARI workflows to incorporate third-party bots and external microapps/connectors that are already within customer environments.

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Synopsis

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