A clear path from RPA to APA.

5 practical steps to scale automation and get results fast.

AUTOMATION ANYWHERE

Contents

Key concepts defined

Agentic AI:

A form of artificial intelligence where agents are capable of autonomous decision making and actions, enabling more dynamic and adaptive automation processes.

Agentic process automation (APA):

The orchestration of multiple AI agents, each capable of reasoning and action, to automate end-to-end business outcomes, not just tasks.

Orchestration:

The capability that integrates and coordinates various automation tools and technologies, ensuring seamless execution and management of complex workflows.

Robotic process automation (RPA):

A technology that uses software robots to automate repetitive, rule-based tasks, improving efficiency and reducing human error.

Advancing from RPA to APA through orchestration

Robotic process automation (RPA) has already proven its worth in enterprises around the world. It reliably handles high-volume, repetitive tasks like data entry, calculations, and file transfers, helping teams cut costs, accelerate processes, and improve accuracy. For automation and business leaders, it's often their first experience of how automation can drive tangible results.

The next step involves expanding these automation capabilities to complex, large-scale processes. This means using orchestration to enable multiple AI agents to work together, the foundation of agentic process automation (APA).

APA combines the reliability of RPA with the intelligence of AI agents, all coordinated through orchestration. It allows you to connect systems, data and workflows to go beyond automating tasks and start automating decisions. And because it builds on existing RPA investments, there's no need to rip and replace.

Instead, it's about connecting, extending, and scaling what's already in place.

This is where the promise of AI converts into practical value by creating a foundation for measurable, enterprise-wide impact. Benefits range from enhancing enterprise resilience through adaptive workflows, to maximizing ROI by unifying data, context and execution.

Fully orchestrated APA helps you scale automation faster, reduce manual oversight, and build resilience into critical processes. With the right APA platform, teams can identify the best candidates for automation, use low-code tools to build and deploy AI agents, and ensure those agents work together seamlessly.

From efficiency to intelligence: The strategic leap from RPA to APA

APA is more than just an evolution in automation technology. By orchestrating multiple AI agents to work together across complex workflows, it represents a strategic shift that transforms how organizations operate. Unlike RPA, which focuses on automating repetitive tasks, APA introduces a new type of intelligent automation that drives significant business value.

Key benefits of APA:

- **Decision automation:** APA goes beyond task automation by enabling decision-making processes to be automated, ensuring faster and more accurate outcomes.

- **Adaptive workflows:** By enhancing enterprise resilience, APA allows workflows to adapt dynamically to changing conditions, ensuring continuity and efficiency.

- **Maximized ROI:** APA unifies data, context, and execution, leading to optimized processes and maximized return on investment.

From RPA to APA in 5 steps.

You can get up and running with APA quickly and efficiently, especially if you're already well versed in RPA and intelligent automation. Solutions available now can streamline the process to help build and orchestrate Al agents that can quickly scale across the enterprise.

Here's how to get started.

Step 01

Step 02

Step 03

Step 04

Step 05

Define your organizational mindset around agentic AI

Go agentic

People as core drivers leveraging AI agents to improve productivity

Incremental, traditional transformation

Whether at an organizational or business unit level, it's important to determine how you want to frame your goals when working towards APA.

Do you prefer to keep your existing processes, roles and responsibilities in place, and simply add AI to help create benefits like revenue growth, customer satisfaction, compliance and risk management? If so, then aim for incremental transformation that focuses on keeping people as the core drivers.
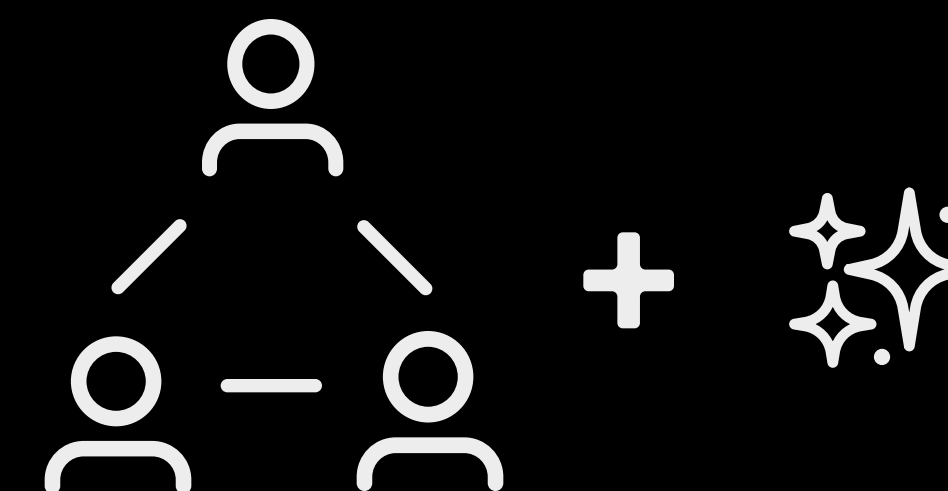
Or do you want to aim higher and be more disruptive? This involves taking an agentic AI-first mindset. You need to be willing to let go of your current ways of working completely and restart everything from scratch with AI as the center. You can then add in structure, process and people as needed to provide oversight and control.

Both approaches can drive huge improvements for your organization. Make sure you have alignment up front about which one is right for you. This will help with decision making further down the road.

Be agentic

AI agents as core drivers (Autonomous Enterprise) with human oversight to close the gaps

Zero-based productivity - organization

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Align stakeholders on success

Align stakeholders on success

Getting the right people engaged and aligned around top-down ambitious goals is essential. You'll need to rethink entire workflows that transcend existing team and activity siloes. Your stakeholders are likely to include:

C-suite and board members:

RPA decisions are often made at a business unit or center of excellence (COE) level. However, the move to APA needs to be a board-level conversation. It has the potential to profoundly impact multiple aspects of the business, including overall performance and the bottom line, so executive leadership must be on board.

Automation COE and developers:

These teams typically take the lead on RPA initiatives, and so are probably the most closely involved in and informed about your current RPA capabilities. They'll be a font of knowledge, guidance and expertise as you build your APA strategy. They will provide a lot of the essential skills and resource to bring it to fruition.

IT leadership:

The IT team owns and oversees your wider IT environment, including data sources, applications, security and compliance. They will be a key partner in any APA initiative.

Business units:

BU leaders (such as HR or finance) are responsible for the success of these initiatives. It's their existing workflows that will be impacted the most. Some may see the possibilities and be excited; some may be resistant to change. Some may not yet be sure. Take them on the journey with you by demonstrating value and addressing concerns to encourage APA adoption.

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Establish your appetite for disruption

Establish your appetite for disruption

The ways RPA and APA work are quite different.

RPA connects siloed systems to deliver business value. While much of this value is defined in terms of saving people time, RPA still requires a lot of manual human effort. For example, getting a full view of a single customer might involve one person looking up information in multiple different systems and copying and pasting it all together.
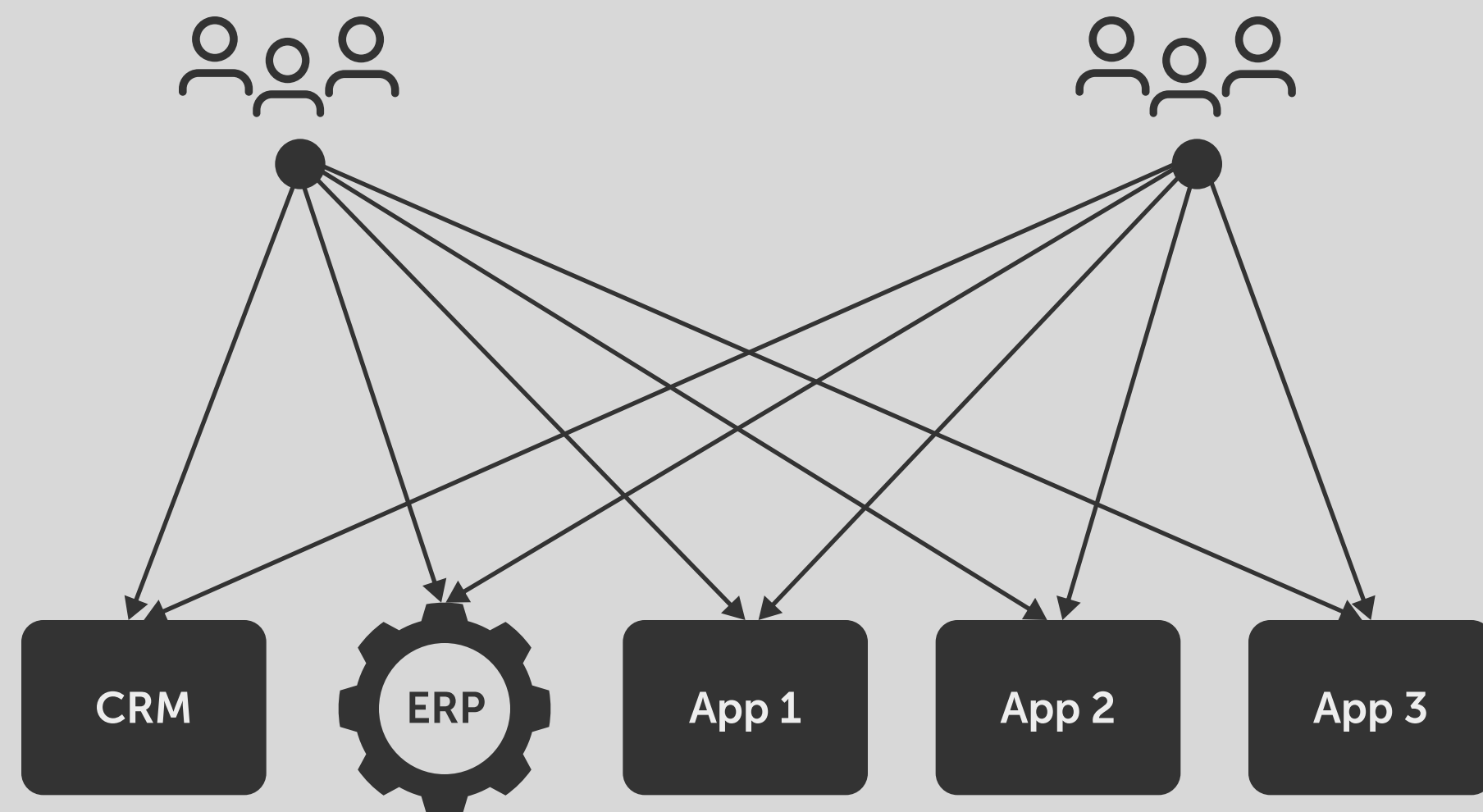
With APA, especially if you're leaning into the agentic AI-first mindset, these silos cease to be an issue. Rather than focusing on how to stitch together the technology, you can focus on overall organizational design and how to arrange it to meet your business objectives. For example, if you need to bring in 10,000 new customers, you can build an automated workflow that pulls together information from systems of record across the business. Customer service agents, order processing teams, inventory managers and all other stakeholders that need to be involved can then easily access it.

The time and cost savings that APA creates, as well as improvements in customer satisfaction and business insights, go far beyond what's possible with RPA. But it's also a more disruptive approach. Establishing your organization's position on the trade-off between disruption and business benefit is another critical foundation for your RPA-to-APA journey. And it's one that should be determined at a board level.
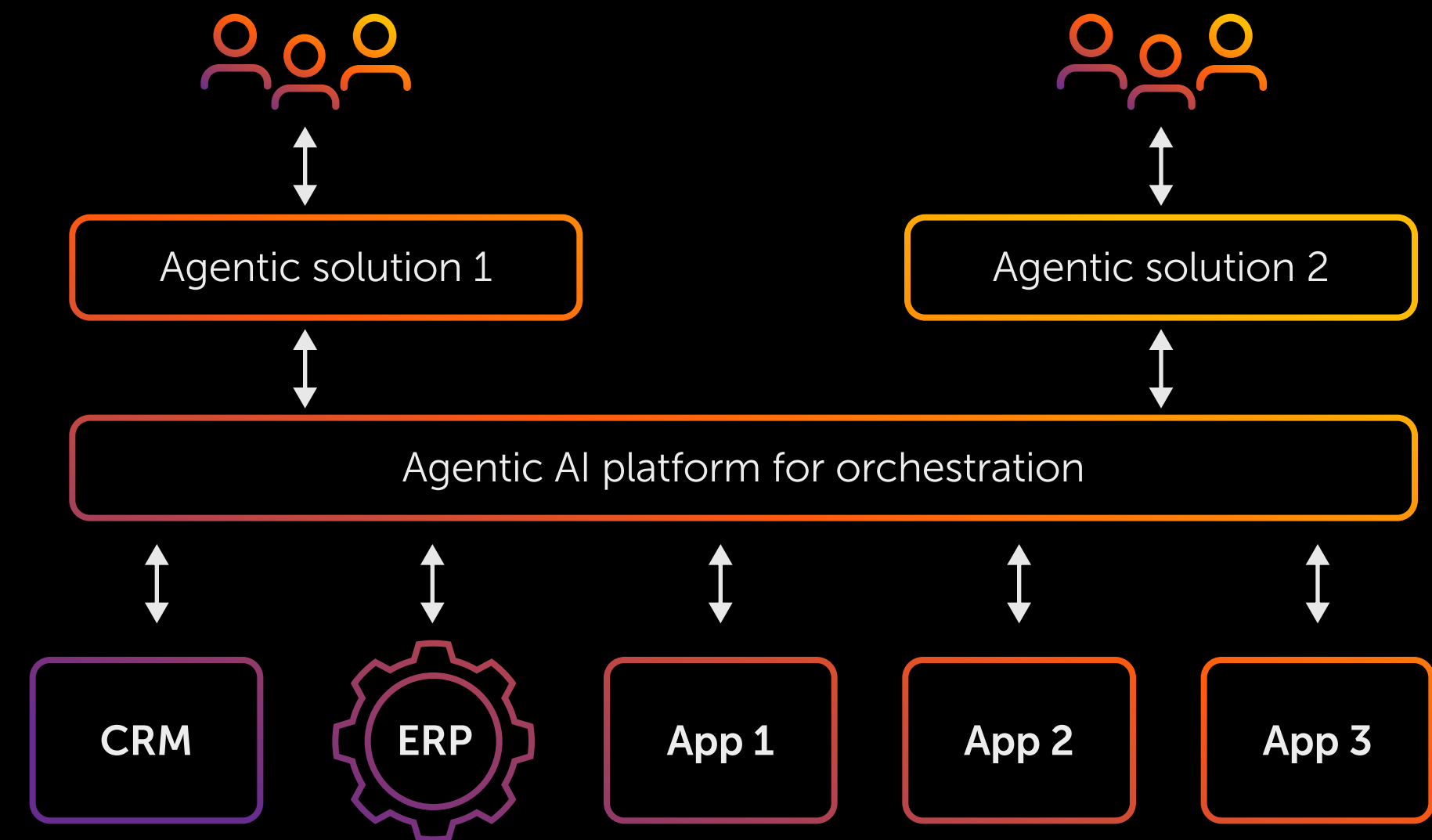
Monolithic, siloed applications (process driver)

Enterprise application siloes create inefficiencies

CRM ERP App 1 App 2 App 3

AI drives new ways of working

AI decimates siloes for the Autonomous Enterprise

Agentic solution 1   Agentic solution 2

Agentic AI platform for orchestration

CRM ERP App 1 App 2 App 3

It's not just applications that are siloed, people are as well

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Step 04 **Start small with a minimum viable architecture**

Step 05

Start small with a minimum viable architecture

As any design thinking or lean practitioner will tell you, getting started and iterating as you learn is the fastest path to success. So your prototype APA workflow — or minimum viable product (MVP) — should focus on what you can reasonably achieve within your first 90 days.

Building the architecture to support a new IT initiative can take months of work for hundreds of people. This doesn't fit with the MVP model. When working with our clients we use the concept of a minimum viable architecture (MVA), which circumvents this issue. We encourage our clients to address data and legacy systems as needed, rather than trying to tackle everything holistically. By building capabilities based on discrete agentic needs, they can avoid creating complex networks of dependencies across enterprise-wide IT programs.

Coupling an MVA with an MVP workflow can get you to business value fast without having to invest up front in the costly time and effort of building a full architecture.

As well as helping to keep early development time and CapEx costs down, this approach helps address ongoing costs, like software licensing. Workflows that depend on multiple users accessing multiple systems can quickly result in huge seat license costs. However, when you're able to reduce the need for people to access these systems, you can significantly reduce the amount you need to spend on licenses. Instead, you can pull all the human-in-the-loop elements needed to manage all these systems into one centralized user interface to oversee the APA workflow.

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Build your roadmap with early-win milestones

Build your roadmap with early-win milestones

A common way of measuring your progress towards APA is to track your percentage autonomy over time. Businesses using RPA may automate 10-30% of processes, while APA can help you run over 50% of processes independently, and up to 80% of work automated overall. Some human input is still necessary to oversee the agentic operations, but you can save on resources and redirect human attention to higher value work.

But how do you navigate this journey?

As with most transformation projects, it helps to break it down into manageable pieces.

Identify the area of the business you want to start with, based on where you're currently seeing issues like low efficiency or high errors due a heavy dependence on manual effort.

Within that, choose a workflow you can tackle quickly to get some fast results. For example, if order management is your area of focus, you might start with the order processing workflow.

Set an objective to deliver results from your pilot automation within 90 days. This early success is critical to prove viability to the board, and to build internal support for further automation initiatives. You might also want to define what percentage autonomy you will aim for within that initial 90-day sprint, and at subsequent milestones to keep you on track.
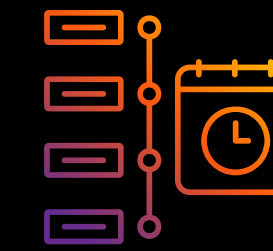
Once you've proved you can deliver on this first initiative, you'll be off to a flying start.

Customer onboarding

- Manual process
- Low human effort
- Error prone

Order processing

- Manual process
- Very high human effort
- Error prone
- Customer satisfaction impact
- Backlogged orders

Invoicing and billing

- Semi manual process
- Medium human effort
- Delayed revenue realization

Inventory management

- Semi manual process
- Medium human effort
- Elevated freight costs
- Customer satisfaction impact
- Delayed orders

The APA impact:
The Washington Post

The Washington Post, founded in 1877, takes a decidedly proactive stance on modernizing operations. To move beyond traditional automation, it integrated AI agents and saw significant gains across processes and teams.

Highlights of its move to APA include:

- APA is significantly reducing manual effort for the Customer Care team by using AI to categorize support tickets.

- In Finance, APA is now used to evaluate 100% of invoices rather than being limited by manual capacity.

- By taking a centralized approach and engaging stakeholders across departments, the company ensured alignment to maximize the impact of APA implementation, identify high-ROI use cases, and foster broad adoption.

- With a unified solution and the tools to build AI agents at scale, The Washington Post anticipates ROI breakeven within 18 to 24 months.

With this shift to AI-powered automation, the company aims to automate up to 80% of tasks, unlocking substantial ROI in a fraction of the time previously required.

Read the full case study

Start your APA journey now

Whether your goal is efficiency, resilience, or innovation, Automation Anywhere's APA system provides a structured path forward. With proven 90-day frameworks and guided expertise, measurable results can be achieved quickly.

Don't believe us? Let us show you.

Request a demo

Contact sales

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