WHY PROCESS DISCOVERY DRIVES SIGNIFICANTLY OPTIMIZED ROI FOR AUTOMATION

Cracking *escalation* to build the digital landscape the post-COVID-19 enterprise needs

While process mining has led many of the headlines to date, process discovery has more recently emerged as, perhaps, a more significant and holistic value driver. Its potential derives from a broader capacity to track and record all of a worker's activities – as opposed to only system-based event logs – and the evolving ability to self-automate lucrative opportunities. Automating more and faster is the key differentiator.

In the first quarter of this year, organizations around the world found themselves unexpectedly faced with enormous challenges that, in some cases, threatened their very survival. With supply chains interrupted and both offices and factory floors suddenly empty, maintaining business support services – let alone business itself – was a challenge. From cash collections, which dropped significantly, to sales, finance, in particular, was under significant pressure. At the same time, employees found themselves forced to work remotely, without the hardware or the networks they were used to. From both a human as well as an execution perspective, Shared Services had to rethink their delivery model.

SSON has continuously surveyed global Shared Services to understand not only how they are navigating through current challenges – but also how they plan to build a more resilient future. The most commonly cited solutions, critically, fall into two camps: advanced Future of Work concepts; and significantly more automation.

This means designing an impactful talent management strategy that optimizes the skills that are needed, where and when they are needed; but it also means aggressively ramping up automation strategies because we are faced with a burning platform. Coming up with more, and faster, automated processing solutions is imperative. Any factors that previously slowed down the movement or even stood in its way need to be eliminated – and eliminated fast.

The pressure now is to identify opportunities to automate, evaluate the impact of automation, and step up the

execution. Humans can do this up to a certain point. The big opportunity right now is to automate the automation.

This report highlights the evolving capabilities of platform-based automation, which can string together previously separate initiatives around identification, prioritization, building, and deploying to scale up and accelerate automated solutions.

BARBARA HODGE
Principal Analyst and
Global Digital Editor
Shared Services and
Outsourcing Network (SSON)

CONTENTS

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MOVING AHEAD: THE OPPORTUNITY LIES IN MORE AND FASTER AUTOMATION

One of the biggest pitfalls to successful automation is process selection – choosing the correct process. This is confirmed again and again in SSON's surveys and constitutes one of the greatest barriers to scaling automation's benefits across an enterprise.

Where your automation initiative has run into trouble, what do you attribute this to?

- We have not adopted automation to date
- Wrong process selection / not fit for selection
- Insufficient change management
- Essential stakeholders insufficiently onboard
- We don't have the necessary skills in-house
- Limited by insufficiently developed data management plan
- Solution provider ended up not being a fit for our project/business needs
- We have not experienced trouble with our IA/RPA

Respondents (%)

32% | 31% | 29% | 17% | 16% | 15% | 11% | 7%
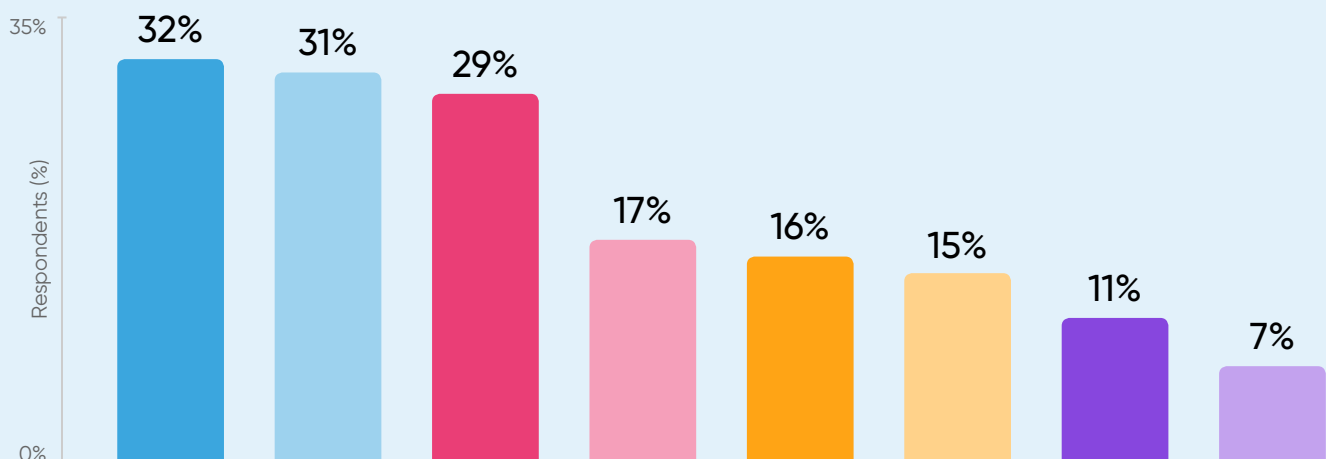
SOURCE: SSON State of the Global Shared Services Industry Report 2020

At the same time, the implementation process itself – from identification through to business case proposal and acceptance – is also lengthy. Too lengthy. The opportunity cost lies not just in processes missed or time wasted, but also in the fact that, today, modern automation platforms can leverage what is being referred to as "hyperautomation." This is essentially the result of combining tried-and-tested RPA building blocks with artificial intelligence (AI), which identifies additional opportunities through analyzing patterns, and machine learning, which teaches the software how to design new solutions. With more intelligent software and learning built into the circuit, automated solutions are able to come up with additional automated solutions.

The result: robots building robots. Said differently, the real opportunity today is to massively accelerate the velocity of automation's deployment. So, where organizations can more effectively identify and streamline business processes prior to automating, they can also accelerate the pace of automation, thus increasing ROI many times over.

With **analysts** currently predicting up to 50% of RPA scripts being generated automatically by 2023, gaining transparency over automation's capability in your enterprise is more critical today than ever. At the same time, the measure of automation's success lies in its impact on the business and in measurable returns. Optimizing automation drives higher returns on investment.

Why process discovery drives significantly optimized ROI for automation

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HOW TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT THROUGH INTEGRATED PROCESS DISCOVERY

From the early days of RPA, automation has been deployed based on measurable impacts to the business. This was often based on time cycles, complexity, or quality measures. In terms of improved performance, early task automation certainly proved successful.

As the understanding of RPA has expanded across organizations, so has the capability of many of the solutions. Advances in AI and machine learning (ML) have driven the potential of RPA beyond the performance improvements of task automation, and, today, offer a domino effect of returns based on faster identification of optimal processes, evaluation of ROI, and improved velocity of execution.

One means of leveraging these advantages is through integrated process discovery.

Integrated process discovery has a significantly greater impact on returns on investment for three reasons:

> **Speed of automation**
> *(i.e., faster deployment)*
> **Broader process selection**
> *(i.e., more processes)*
> **Leading to hyperautomation**
> *(bots building bots in an ever-accelerating chain).*

Let's evaluate these factors separately.

Automating faster

The challenge in executing and deploying automation has been around resources. In the years since RPA was introduced to business services, the implementation process was highly manual: teams of employees painstakingly evaluated a process to identify opportunities. Process documentation was assessed against interviews with process experts. Resource scarcity, along with gaps in process expertise, meant many opportunities were still being overlooked. Indeed, more than half* the time expended on automation tended to be spent on understanding the process and its potential for automation, rather than on implementation.

The ability to automate the process of discovery is a game-changer in terms of speeding up what was a manual process. Today, modern automation solutions enable the entire process flow to be automatically recorded and documented by the business user; process analysts then review these recordings to identify automation opportunities, and RPA experts build the relevant required bots. The entire process of identification and deployment is combined in a seamlessly integrated solution.

*SOURCE: Automation Anywhere research with customers

Why process discovery drives significantly optimized ROI for automation

Automating more processes

While automation projects are driven by business users, the primary challenge is still identifying appropriate use cases. Large volumes of transactions and manual activity tend to flag commonly targeted processes for automation. The opportunities extend far further; however, identifying and justifying additional automations has been difficult in the past, where manual teams had to research process opportunities based on inefficiencies under "as is" scenarios.

The obvious solution is to let technology do the research and identification. New tools incorporate process discovery capabilities that both identify optimal opportunities and automatically prioritize them based on their ROI. These tools have been super-powered by the ability to track all users' activities (as opposed to just where they interact with systems/applications) and apply pattern recognition to these recordings through AI technology. Machine learning then addresses repetitive steps that are incorporated in new, more intelligent automations.

Hyperautomation: Accelerating automation velocity

Given the speed and scope of automation addressed above, today offers an opportunity to not just speed up automation's deployment but escalate the deployment to drive much higher returns for the enterprise. Process flows and data are reviewed for potential; process expertise is combined with predicted ROI to select optimal opportunities, and bot experts automatically design and build required bots. The combination of these capabilities results in hyperautomation – a significantly accelerated velocity of optimal deployment.

Intelligent automation is thus able to identify its own opportunities and design the necessary solutions.

This evolution builds on key advances in AI and ML that drive more intelligent identification of new possibilities for automation and deployment. As a result, we see a future of automation building on automation, building on automation. This is predicated on the fact that technology is better at identifying, evaluating, and building automation than humans. While human teams scour the process landscape to identify repetitive opportunities for automation, build a business case, argue for prioritization based on various competing projects, and then tap the resources to build bots, the emerging alternative is that bots do all this work for you.

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IMPROVED ROI THROUGH A MORE HOLISTIC PROCESS DISCOVERY

PRINCE KOHLI
CTO, heading Products
and Engineering,
Automation Anywhere

RAJESH RADHAKRISHNAN
Executive Vice President,
Digital Workforce Solutions,
Automation Anywhere

JAIDEEP SHAH
Principal Product Manager,
Automation Anywhere

SSON: For enterprises looking to automation to support them in navigating through this crisis, the opportunity highlighted in this report lies in holistic process discovery. In that context, how are traditional approaches falling short?

Rajesh Radhakrishnan: This is really about the current model not being as efficient or as effective as it needs to be. Typically, an automation Center of Excellence knows all about the tools, while business users know their processes. The challenge is to identify the best fit process – right? With so many business users, how do the right processes bubble up to the top? To identify a good fit, the CoE analyst needs to get together with the business user to document the process end-to-end, ask questions about it, and find the automation opportunity. That approach is both ineffective and inefficient. It's ineffective because you're not able to get to all the potential processes out there – or even the best processes; and it's inefficient because you're going to have to sit down with each of the individual business users to figure out how best to implement automation.

What the process discovery solution allows is for business users to document the processes themselves by recording their process and thus documenting it. And our platform-based approach means these recordings can easily be converted to automation. There is still an important role for the CoE, but it's not about lengthy analysis and evaluation. In today's COVID-19 environment, when analysts can't actually sit down and look over a business user's shoulder, this is a fantastic solution to speed up and optimize automation.

SSON: How do you measure the ROI on this approach?

RR: When you evaluate ROI, you're looking at factors like: How often is this particular process used? How much time does it consume? And how important is it from an organization's point of view? The longer something takes to process, the more often it happens, the benefits are obviously higher. The other factor is relative importance to the enterprise. If you take reconciliations, automation means you reconcile faster. Now you can close your books sooner. That's a meaningful output for an enterprise.

The other side of the story is the cost of automation. That's something we can very effectively evaluate through the software. The number of robots required and their cost are automatically worked out.

SSON: The idea that we can maintain business continuity or resiliency through automation, that's also a critical benefit – just measured in different currency, right?

Prince Kohli: Absolutely. Just consider the airline industry. Automation was always an interesting

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›› Improved ROI Through a More Holistic Process Discovery

proposition but with COVID-19, what happened was there was a huge spike in call volumes, cancellations, rebookings, etc. … all those process complexities were suddenly top of mind. Airlines had no option but to use intelligent automation. So in this case, the measure is not: How much faster? How much cheaper? It's about "can we survive or can't we?" And automation is part of that decision.

Another example is in UK healthcare, where medical staff found themselves having to manually check oxygen cylinders to ensure they were available for patients who needed them. With nurses and doctors busy with patients, checking cylinder levels was an added pressure. RPA was a great solution, scanning and reading oxygen levels automatically. Again, this is an example where automation enables the core activity to continue uninterrupted. It's not about time or volume. It's about saving lives. How do you calculate the ROI on that?

RR: One other concern that arises in remote work scenarios is that you don't know who is looking over someone's shoulder in a home office. Contact centers, for example, are dealing with a lot of personally identifiable information. So it's a perfect opportunity for robotics, where the benefit metric is not necessarily measured in conventional terms but in terms of ensuring the business can operate.

SSON: The push now is towards what used to be called scale – now hyperautomation. Given the disruption caused by the pandemic, the idea of driving automation exponentially is very attractive. How does this work?

RR: Many organizations today are under pressure and trying to figure out how to drive faster and bigger scale. There is either the linear, slow and steady approach – or the hockey stick approach. And the only choice for that strong uptick is to get automation in the hands of as high a percentage of employees as possible. Right now, the number of employees accessing automation is just not

large enough to create a significant change. But to get it in the hands of a large number of employees, everything needs to be available on a single platform that reaches across the entire enterprise. The challenge again is, how are business users able to participate in the automation? Well, our solutions allow anybody to run a bot without knowing what a bot is and without logging into a control room. This works because, through Discovery Bot, anybody can produce a bot; and through Interactive Forms, anyone can consume, or use, one. So by making it easy for anyone to make a bot, and for anyone to use a bot, we are rapidly pushing out bot use. ››

"When you evaluate ROI, you're looking at factors like: How often is this particular process used? How much time does it consume? And how important is it from an organization's point of view? The longer something takes to process, the more often it happens… the benefits are obviously higher."

RAJESH RADHAKRISHNAN
Executive Vice President,
Digital Workforce Solutions, Automation Anywhere

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The fact that the solution is available in the cloud means anybody can access it from anywhere and at any time. It's instantly available to everyone. So access is easy, the process is easy, and suddenly automation really is available across the entire enterprise. You still run the governance through your Center of Expertise because that's important for security, compliance, things like that. But with this set up hyperautomation is suddenly very real.

> ## "It's about 'can we survive or can't we?' And automation is part of that decision."
>
> **PRINCE KOHLI**
> CTO, heading Products and Engineering, Automation Anywhere

From a governance perspective, I just want to point out that if there is a process that impacts maybe just a few people, then a business user can and should create it. That is what drives the scaling opportunity. But if it is a reconciliation process, then you want your developers to build the automation because it needs to be hardened into the IT landscape. So now you have the ability to choose one of these two options, as appropriate. In the past, you could only get to a few options – now, it is literally thousands.

PK: Rajesh highlighted accessibility and skill, which are probably the primary drivers for hyperautomation, but there is another important factor, and that is the ability to automate a lengthy process end-to-end. Now we can actually move from short, task automation to potentially automating the entire company, in a manner of speaking. It's about looking beyond tasks and having an intelligent automation platform manage an entire critical process. That is really the next evolution of where we are going: digitizing the enterprise. The way we see it, Discovery Bot is a process discovery solution. From there, you create

the bot that run the process. So we truly have gotten to a point where bots are creating bots. And then we have bots managing bots, as well, by measuring operational data: How long are they taking? Are there outliers? Are there failures? All that is monitored by bots, too.

SSON: What changes can we expect in the next year or two?

PK: Today, we are at a place where software can identify, software can automate, and software can manage automation. Therefore, actual human involvement is reduced to where the software does all the heavy lifting. Many organizations begin the automation journey with an idea of the first few processes that are critical and they want to automate. Then, they are persuaded by their experience and want to scale up. But the problem is they just can't see 80% of their enterprise activities. And that is where they are now able to unlock the true automation potential of their enterprise via Discovery Bot.

Jaideep Shah: One change we will see is in the speed of automation. I think we are all in agreement there. But that can't happen unless the process by which you are discovering automation opportunities is changed. Discovery Bot gives you the opportunity to change the traditional process – from doing research with business users, reviewing documentation, etc. – to democratizing that process. Now, we've made it possible for business users to transform to citizen developers. That process change enables and eliminates the entire sequence of complex steps to deliver hyperautomation.

There is also the ability to iterate. You can start with one process or a number of processes. You no longer need months to identify bot requirements. If the process is simple enough and you see the pattern earlier on, you can generate a bot and start seeing it coming to production much faster. So you can now see it as common problems being eliminated very quickly and a more refined process discovered as you evolve the automations. These are some of the other things that lead to that hyperautomation.

TURNING OPPORTUNITIES INTO RETURNS DEPENDS ON RELIABLE DATA – AND KNOWLEDGE

One of the critical challenges to escalating automation is the fragmented process knowledge that typically characterizes an organization. Much of this is due to functional or operational silos that don't support seamless data exchanges. While subject matter experts understand the ins and outs of their part of the process, they lack the end-to-end expertise that is required to understand the greater good. At the other end of the spectrum, while management has responsibility for end-to-end processes, it generally lacks the hands-on experience to correctly identify significant opportunities.

Through the ability to capture a process and visualize its flow, and track specific user actions with screenshots, invaluable data is provided that feeds new RPA solutions. Yet, this is just one part of the puzzle. The other is to fast-track opportunities by automatically assessing their ROI and prioritizing the opportunities with the most significant impact. And finally, the required bots can be autonomously self-generated.

## The challenge is to combine the knowledge and data potential of four critical stakeholders:

1 The business users who perform the process and are specialists in their particular area of the process

2 The managers who are responsible for end-to-end process performance

3 The process experts who understand how to optimize

4 The RPA developers who enable the solutions

The difficulty is in bringing all these moving parts together – generic-, subject matter-, process- and technical expertise. Relying on humans is not the solution, so here is where technology can step in. State-of-the-art tools allow users to record their activity; process analysts to review recordings; process managers to give the green light; and RPA developers to build the automation.

Step and repeat.

How Discovery Bot accelerates automation velocity
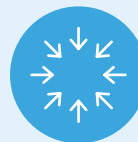
Capture
Discover the process automatically

Map
Visualize the process flow

Identify
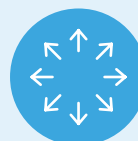Detect automation opportunities

Prioritize
Assess ROI and prioritize opportunities

Generate
Create RPA bots automatically

Deploy
Review, optimize and deploy bots

SOURCE: Automation Anywhere

WHY PROCESS DISCOVERY IS MORE COMPREHENSIVE AND INCLUSIVE

Process discovery is a more holistic approach that uses data collected by recording user interactions with systems' user interfaces. Process mining reads logs and reconstructs the flows of events via changes in the system status. Those changes are not necessarily caused by user interactions. They can also result from internal rules built into the system. One of the limitations of mining solutions, therefore, is that you see that an event happened but can't always trace it back to a particular user's actions.

Therein lies the weakness of process mining and the opportunity for process discovery.

The discovery approach is more comprehensive in being able to record user interactions with various systems, terminal, and virtual environments. A user's activities are recorded in the background, with screenshots providing visibility over how, exactly, the work is done.

Where process mining supports process optimization within enterprise systems, process discovery drives more comprehensive end-to-end process automation.

A PLATFORM STRATEGY EXTENDS OPTIONS

While in the early days of automation the industry was defined by specialist shops developing specific tools, the trend today is for providers to offer platform-based automation solutions, which integrate with ease. These platforms solve for the need to connect various standalone solutions to a base platform but also ensure integration of all emerging and evolving capabilities – many of which are now offering game-changing capabilities that no enterprise wants to do without.

Some of the current solutions are able to combine AI

with ML to discover automation opportunities, and then prioritize these based on their predicted ROI.

In addition, to drive improved speed of deployment, some providers today are offering cloud and hybrid options as well as marketplaces as a means of tapping into needed resources on demand when they are needed.

The resource impediment is thus solved, to ensure nothing stands in the way of turning opportunity into practice and realizing the promised ROI.

Why process discovery drives significantly optimized ROI for automation
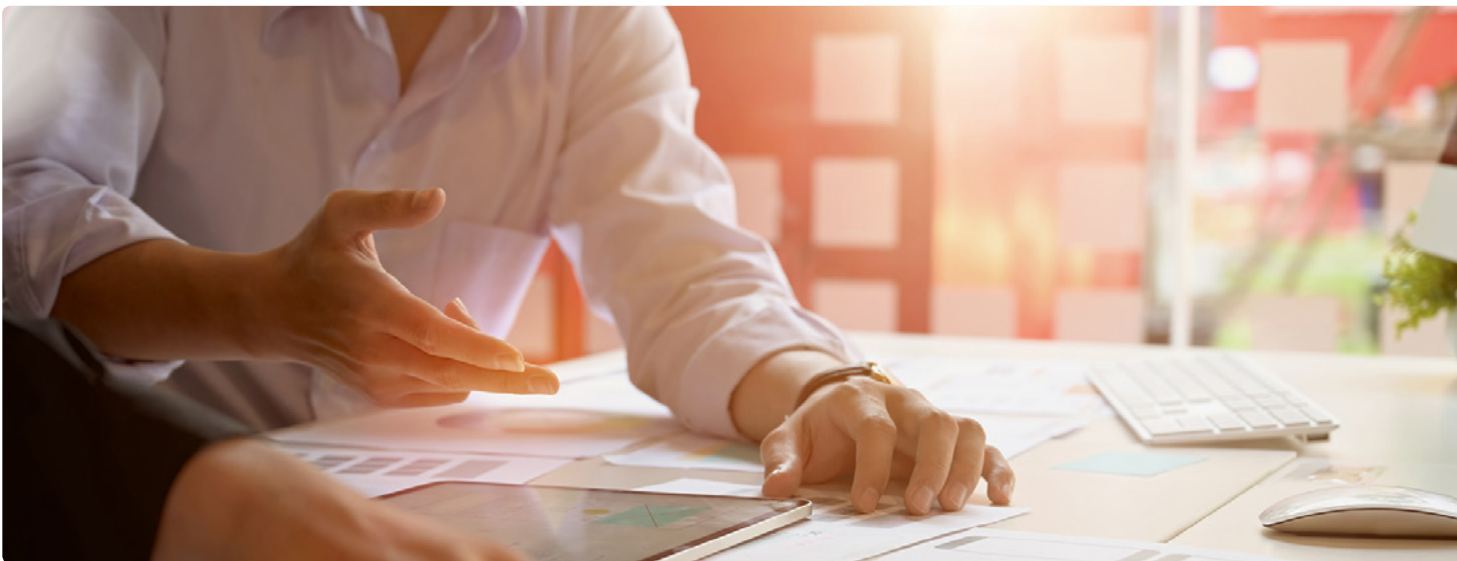
With Shared Services practitioners battling a burning platform, significantly scaling automation has emerged as one of the two primary drivers for a more resilient and successful future.

The challenge remains: how?

SSON market data confirms that process selection remains one of the leading challenges to successful automation. So, we need to start with the basics – but then scale up solutions faster and better. More than that, though, we need to get into the weeds to find the right opportunities for automation – opportunities that extend beyond system impacts into what humans do. New process discovery solutions make this possible.

When it comes to escalating automation, there is the concept of hyperautomation. This is where artificial intelligence is leveraged, again and again, to identify additional opportunities for automation, in an ever-increasing spiral.

The objective is to approach digitized enterprise operations that are agile, reliable, fast, and effective. All that is to come.

The first step is to make the right choice.

ABOUT AUTOMATION ANYWHERE

Automation Anywhere is a global leader in Robotic Process Automation (RPA), empowering customers to auto-mate end-to-end business processes with software bots – Digital Workers that perform repetitive and manual tasks, resulting in dramatic productivity gains, optimized customer experience, and more engaged employees. The company offers the world's only web-based and cloud-native intelligent automation platform combining RPA, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and analytics right out of the box, to help organizations rapidly start and scale their process automation journey. Its Bot Store is the world's first and largest marketplace with more than 850 pre-built, intelligent automation solutions. With offices in more than 40 countries and a global network of 1,500 partners, Automation Anywhere has deployed more than 2.1 million bots to support some of the world's largest enterprises across all industries. For additional information, visit www.automationanywhere.com.

ABOUT THE SHARED SERVICES & OUTSOURCING NETWORK (SSON)

The Shared Services & Outsourcing Network (SSON) is the largest and most established community of shared services and outsourcing professionals in the world, with over 160,000 members.

Established in 1999, SSON recognized the revolution in support services as it was happening and realized that a forum was needed through which practitioners could connect with each other on a regional and global basis.

SSON is a one-stop shop for shared services professionals, offering industry-leading events, training, reports, surveys, interviews, white papers, videos, editorial, infographics, and more.