Elevate your enterprise performance with RPA

Executive Summary

Robotic Process Automation, or RPA, can deliver operational efficiency, time savings and substantial cost reduction quickly. This white paper will help you to better understand how RPA can help your business drive rapid results and achieve better accuracy, improved employee experience, and ensure regulatory and standards compliance by producing accurate results, every time.

Topics covered

WHAT IS RPA?

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE VS RPA

WHY IS RPA IMPORTANT?

HOW CAN YOU USE RPA?

WHAT CAN YOU AUTOMATE WITH RPA?

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PURCHASING RPA?

HOW CAN RPA GROW YOUR BOTTOM LINE?

RPA shouldn't be a scary proposition. In fact, with the right tools and proper training, your organization can be up and running in a matter of hours, automating those mundane and routine tasks that lead to unsatisfied employees and the potential for errors.
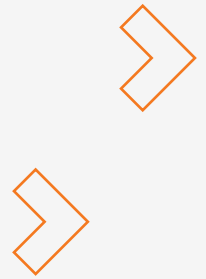
What is RPA?

RPA is a software technology that allows for the automation of various computer tasks or computer based business processes. If you have ever found yourself spending a significant amount of time on the computer completing repetitive, manual, low-value tasks or projects that require more work from your hands than your brain, it may be time to consider using Robotic Process Automation software.

RPA provides the tools to streamline both complex and simple processes that are typically done by a human being on a computer. Automation is achieved by deploying software "bots" that have been trained on the exact mouse motions, keystrokes, and rules-based logic underlying a given task. RPA software mimics exactly what a human being would do on the computer (given the underlying rules and instructions of the task), by autonomously using a mouse and keyboard at a much faster rate and without the risk of human error.

RPA is meant to be intuitive. If you know how to do the process yourself, you can teach the software. Anyone can start using an RPA software solution pretty quickly; it's not meant to be used solely by IT professionals or programmers. RPA use by IT, Ops, Process Experts and the line of business has grown significantly over the last few years. Business users are finding a multitude of tasks can be completed or scheduled for completion by quickly teaching RPA software how and when to complete them.

Artificial Intelligence vs. RPA

In the last decade, we've witnessed a surge of discussion around and utilization of AI - Artificial Intelligence. While the idea of a computer being able to make decisions on its own is appealing to some business owners, the realistic utilization of powerful artificial intelligence requires a lot of money, expertise, and data.

Artificial intelligence mimics traits of human intelligence in that it enables machines to learn about, plan for, and solve problems. AI uses algorithms and data to come to the same intelligent conclusions that a human would, without any actual human guidance.

With RPA there is no organic decision-making happening, only rule following. To some, the ability to adapt to unknown circumstances is what defines "intelligence". By that definition, RPA would not be considered intelligent, because not only are the circumstances known, they are clearly defined in a set of rule-based instructions, called scripts or botflows. In other words, while scripting may seem like a complex AI process, it's really not. RPA is not "AI-powered," but it is fully user defined. Instead of operating completely autonomously, it acts more like an extension of your team — something to which you can delegate manual, repetitive, and low-priority tasks.

RPA. Human+robot working together.
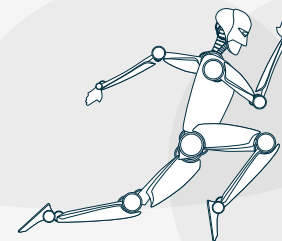
AI. Mind of its own.
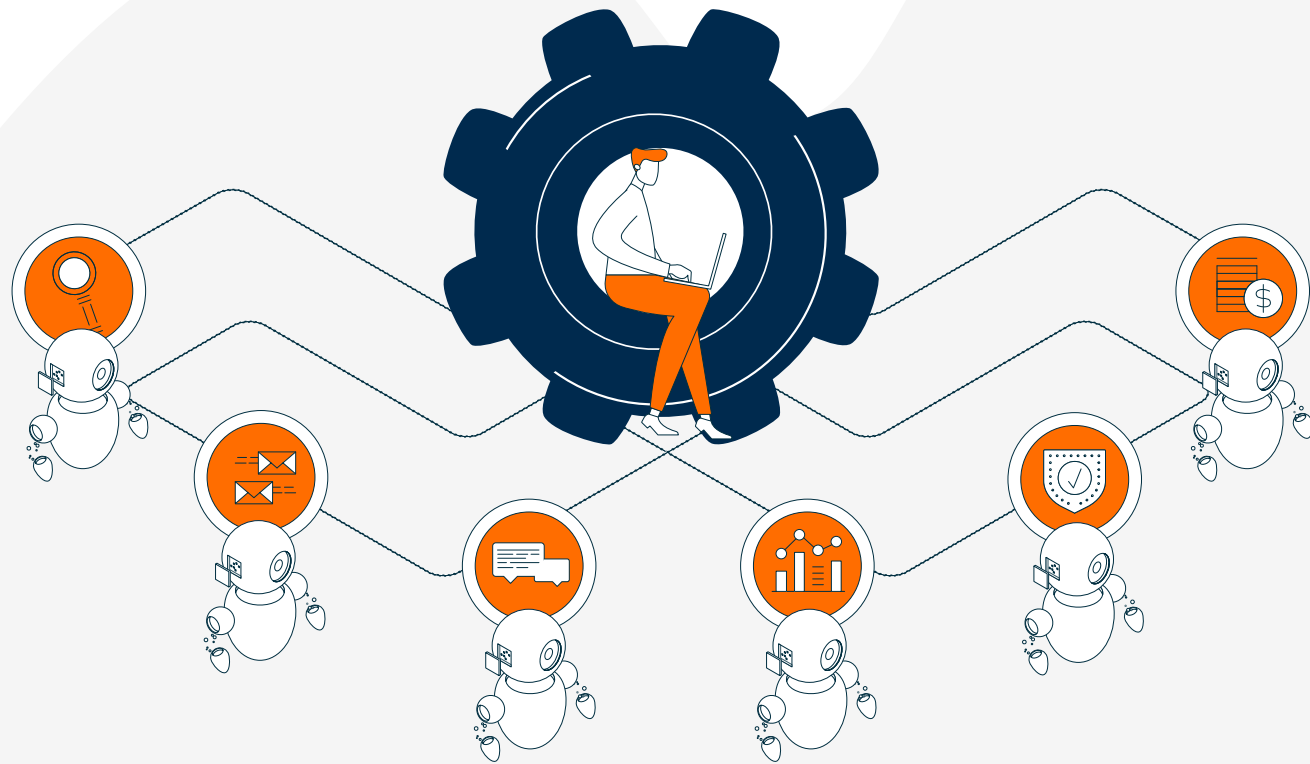
Section 2

Why is RPA important?

Successful businesses harness many different applications to run their operations, support their websites, acquire new customers, or support their current customer base. As a result, businesses dedicate substantial budget to the license and maintenance costs of these systems. To limit additional, hidden costs outside of this budget, business leaders are regularly concerned with how their employees are utilizing these applications and whether a complex computer environment leads to inefficient use of employee time.

RPA should not be thought of as just another application to add to the collection. Instead, think of RPA as an actual employee assigned tasks to achieve a certain outcome. While other applications like a CRM, ERP, or Excel, are used by businesses to store important information, RPA is used to interact with information on a computer screen exactly how you would as a human being, so you don't have to spend time on it yourself.

RPA is an application that can actually reduce the time needed to complete tasks. Businesses frequently hire temporary employees to complete manual, labor intensive, repetitive tasks that require little training or low skill levels. RPA allows you to complete more work, faster, and allows humans to focus on the more important value added tasks.

RPA also eliminates the risk of human error. Think of a worker performing a mundane task such as copying cells from a spreadsheet and pasting them into a database. There are numerous points within that process that an error could occur. If the task is repetitive and manual, RPA can be easily taught to emulate the same steps in the process. The RPA bot however will not make mistakes like a human can. Once it is trained it will perform and complete a mundane task without error over and over again.

It is a misconception that RPA is complex and difficult to implement. In fact RPA can be deployed almost immediately. RPA bots are also "application agnostic", they interact with apps via the user interface just like a human user making use of the same log ins, credentials, keystrokes, etc. Because of this, there is no need for complex connectors or coding to direct the RPA bot to complete the desired results.

Section 3

How can you use RPA?

RPA is best suited for tasks and processes which require a human to manually perform a repetitive action. Because this requirement is so minimal, there are infinite use cases for RPA across every business.

Many businesses look for RPA solutions when they are facing one of the following scenarios:

1 An upcoming large project that requires significant work with data or different systems to integrate/ communicate with each other

**2** Tasks are manual and/ or routine (daily, weekly, monthly, triggered, etc.) which require company resources

Sure, RPA is a solution for either of those scenarios. But, an organization will get the most out of RPA if it is used in both of those scenarios. Think of RPA software as a member on your team that can automate any task that is manual and repetitive, no matter if it's routine or project-based.

Applications used by RPA

RPA users can build automated processes for the majority of applications and document formats that businesses employ. Whether the task uses desktop apps, web apps, Excel workbooks, PDF forms, terminal emulators, or a combination of several different application sources, the RPA system will be able to jump from source to source to complete the automated task.

Common Applications & File Formats used by RPA include:

- Excel
- Outlook
- VMWare
- Citric
- Accounting software
- CRM (i.e. Salesforce)
- Real Estate listings (i.e. Redfin, Zillow)
- ERP (i.e SAP, Oracle, JD Edwards)
- Core Banking Systems (i.e. Fiserv, Jack Henry, FIS)
- PDF Files
- CSS Files
- Legacy – In House Systems
- Online Databases (i.e. Labor stats, census, real estate listings, directories)
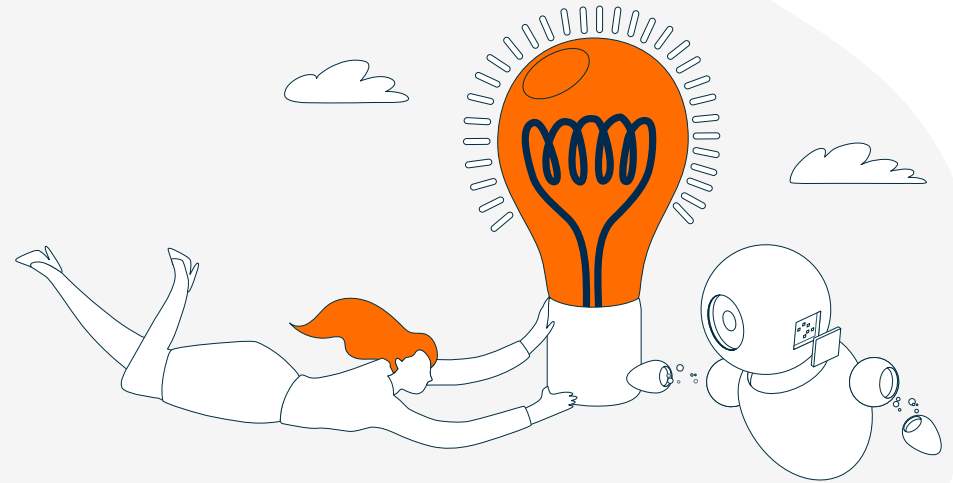
Who can use RPA?

One of the driving forces behind RPA's growing popularity is that users no longer need a technical background or programming experience to use the software. This is not to say that all RPA software is so easily accessible. There are still more developer-centric RPA products in the market that require a dedicated IT staff for implementation and maintenance.

Some RPA products are now designed for business users and offer an intuitive interface as well as training to help users get started right away. RPA products with centralized control allow the individual process owner to build the script or botflow, while giving IT the control and governance to ensure it meets the security requirements of the business.

Section **4**

What can you automate with RPA?

RPA is sometimes associated with certain specific functions, like IT or data processing. The truth is, RPA can be leveraged across almost any manual, repetitive task, regardless of department, business function, or industry.

The most common use cases for RPA are:

- Report generation

- Routine system maintenance

- Data entry and data maintenance

- Data consolidation, clean up, and de-duplication

- Data manipulation and catalog updates

- Data extraction and information gathering

- Integration of various systems that use different data formats

- Aggregation of data from different sources

- Mass data migrations

- Transactional processes

- Actions that are triggered by an event (notifications, reminders)

- File transfers

- Systems conversions

- Mergers, acquisitions, and expansions

If a business decides to use RPA, they'll discover more and more use cases across different business functions and departments, leading to higher returns on investment. Nearly all businesses will be able to find manual work tasks related to HR, sales & marketing, accounting & finance, operations, purchasing & inventory, or IT & security that can be automated with RPA.

FINANCE & ACCOUNTING

Tasks to automate > General ledger accounts reporting | Data migration between accounting reports | Billing & invoice generation, and distribution | Data pulls for reporting | Collections & revenue cycle management

OPERATIONS & PURCHASING

Tasks to automate > Inventory monitoring, replenishing, and status notifications | Inventory, pricing, A/P reporting, and report distribution | Updates to product catalog (i.e. SKU numbers, serial numbers, pricing, etc.) | Vendor & supplier onboarding

HUMAN RESOURCES

Tasks to automate > Payroll processing | Vendor cost analysis Audit trails | Employee onboarding & offboarding | Archive & clean up | Job posting distribution | Group email and notifications management Employee benefits and insurance election

MARKETING & SALES

Tasks to automate > Social media updates | Competitive intelligence research | Customer behavior data management and analysis | Contact list segmentation | Email or sales automation | Sales or marketing platform maintenance

IT & SECURITY

Tasks to automate > User access and account maintenance | Data consolidation, clean up, and deduplication | File transfers between systems

Section 5

What to consider when purchasing RPA?

Determining what solution is right for your organization and the tasks you want to automate is key as it will impact cost, customizations, usability, and any staffing requirements needed to manage the RPA software.

Scale of Tasks

There is a range of RPA solutions on the market designed to meet the varying needs of business. Some software packages are better suited for larger enterprises, so mid to small-sized business may find that they will be paying for integration, functions, and services that they don't necessarily need. Other RPA solutions are designed for any size of business, and are scalable as the business needs arise. For some products, scaling RPA down can be difficult, while scaling up is less of a problem. Scaling up is just a matter of creating and performing more automation. RPA software has many applications, across different departments, functions, and industries. The more tasks you can identify that would benefit from RPA, the more value the RPA software will have for your organization.
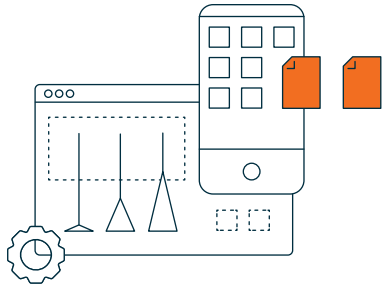
User Interface

RPA software can be categorized into two main types of user interfaces: User-Level GUI Emulator vs. Apps Integration.

USER-LEVEL GUI EMULATOR

This type of RPA solution allows users to perform a series of tasks or processes using the relevant applications on their device, while the RPA records the series of actions as a script. When this recorded script is deployed, the RPA will complete the automated tasks or process. The advantage of this type of RPA is that processes involving multiple applications can be easily automated. These solutions are typically lower in cost because the software developers did not have to build many integrations with the applications used in automation.

APPS INTEGRATION

This type of RPA solutions is built with integrations between the RPA system and some major applications used by businesses (i.e. Excel, Outlook, Oracle, Salesforce, etc.). Custom integrations drive up the RPA deployment costs and require that IT be available to maintain these integrations.

Access

RPA solutions can be hosted on a local device drive, on a private network server, in a secure cloud, or some combination of the three. The main difference between these options is control over the software and storage.

Hosting locally or on your internal network servers means only your company will have access to the software and scripts created. Cloud hosting means you would be using the software and storage from the RPA provider's servers. Many App integration RPA solutions offer cloud hosting due to the large scale and volume of tasks being automated. While having both cloud and local/network access may be convenient, this option also tends to be more expensive.

Hosting will also depend on how many people in your organization are using the RPA. If it's just one or two people, then maybe individual, locally hosted licenses will suffice. If several people or a few departments are using the RPA software, you may want to consider a network license.
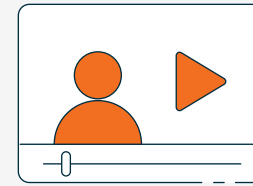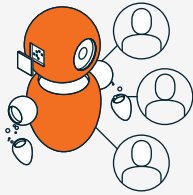
Implementation & training

Implementing an RPA solution and then learning how to use it effectively can require varying degrees of effort. Some solutions allow users to implement the software themselves and get started right away with video tutorials. Others may need dedicated IT staff for implementation and maintenance, and may even require a business to use channel partners for implementation.

If you must rely on a channel partner, be wary that third-parties could have different service level agreements than the RPA provider. As a result, your RPA provider may not be accountable for integration or maintenance, and may be unable to guarantee support on some issues.

Staffing requirement

As mentioned above, some solutions require dedicating IT staff to manage, maintain systems, and add workflows for automation. This could be an additional expense for your organization and prolong the implementation process if you need to hire staff or vet third-party partners.

If the additional cost and time does not fit within your budget, there are RPA solutions that do not require dedicated IT staff for implementation or maintenance. Look for RPA vendors that offer professional service teams as part of the software package to assist your organization with getting the software up and running.
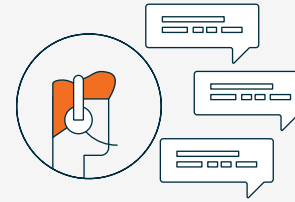
Customer support

The level of support offered by an RPA provider can be a critical factor in your satisfaction with the experience. Some solutions come with dedicated technical and training support included, while others give the option of support (or insurance) as an add-on for a fixed fee or subscription.

Check if support staff are located domestically or internationally and if their hours and contact methods are convenient for your organization. Regardless of the support type, be sure to read customer reviews to get a real sense for responsiveness and helpfulness of your RPA solution support. Some RPA software also comes with self support resources, training resources, and user forums at no additional cost.

Costs

After considering the points listed above, it's time to consider costs. Depending on which considerations are most important to your organization, the price of an RPA solution can vary significantly. Those characteristics, as well as how many users will be using the RPA software, determine whether the cost will range from a few thousand dollars to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The best way to figure out the right cost of RPA is to request a consultation with a solution expert. An RPA expert can help you determine the right functionality, access, and support for your organization's needs and create a package that both meets your requirements and fits your budget.

How can RPA grow your bottom line?

Time allocation and human capital

Businesses need people and people cost money. To get the best return from money spent on human capital, your employees should spend their 40 - 80 hours per week working on the most value-add activities that their expertise allows for (e.g. you would not have your CEO cleaning the bathrooms). A sales rep should be spending a significant amount of time on deal closing or prospecting -- not cleaning data in the CRM. A customer service rep should be spending time on helping to resolve customer issues -- not hooking up the phone system.

One challenge that accounting teams face is manually transferring data from numerous invoices, that come in various formats, into an accounting system. An RPA script can be deployed to interpret information on invoices using optical character recognition (OCR) and automatically transfer the data to an accounting system. RPA also reduces the risk of accounting issues due to human error and allows employees to focus on more important financial activities including budgeting and strategy.
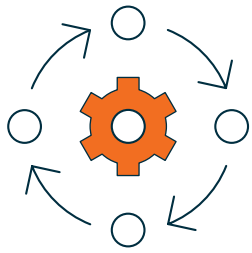
Operational efficiency and human error

Not only will RPA help organizations complete repetitive operational tasks at a faster rate than a human being, but it can also improve the efficiency of operational processes and eliminate the risk of human error. RPA can drastically improve operational efficiency—by up to 70%, according to some reports. A wide range of repetitive and manual tasks, such as transcription, data reconciliation, and report generation can all be completed by RPA bots much faster than humans. RPA can also cut administrative costs by as much as 80%—saving organizations tens of millions of dollars per year, and helping them avoid costs of outsourcing or investing in temp staff for data entry.

Many legacy systems rely on conditions being met, or boxes being checked, before a standard business process can be completed. RPA serves as an assurance that those requirements are met before standard business procedures, or workflows, take place. These could be considered maintenance or clean-up tasks; they're usually smaller checks and balance tasks that humans are unconditionally predisposed to forgetting or accidentally making errors. Relying solely on humans to complete important operational tasks can be a mistake! People forget things, get distracted, and make mistakes every day, while robots do not.
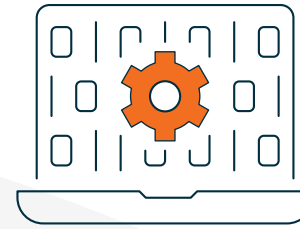
Reporting accuracy and data integrity

RPA lets you spend more of your time on valuable activities. It also improves the accuracy of these activities. By eliminating human error, RPA increases data integrity and makes every analytical activity, and resulting business decision, more impactful.

What seem to be minor improvements, like no missed decimal points in your accounting, or numbers that are always copied and pasted into the correct cell, can have a major business impact. These type of errors can have serious tax-related consequences, for example. Similarly, having an accurate and up to date inventory status means avoiding placing excess or incorrect orders, ultimately reducing waste.

Section 7

Exercise

Here are 5 questions to help you determine how your organization will benefit from RPA:

1. Take a look at your your organization. What activities are people spending most of their time on?

2. Are these value-adding activities or are they low-value, manual, repetitive activities?

3. If you could automate these activities and assign them to a bot, how much time would that equate to? How much in human capital cost could you save?

4. Now, if all of that time could be spent on value-add or revenue-driving activities, how much growth could your team or organization gain over the course of 1 year?

5. What does that revenue growth mean to your team and your organization?

RPA tackles your balance sheet from the bottom and from the top. It enables you to cut down on human capital costs spent on manual tasks through automation and increases the speed at which tasks are completed. It enables you to grow your bottom line by reallocating that human capital to valuable, revenue generating activities.

A consultation with an RPA expert can help you identify what tasks can be automated and size the opportunity for your organization. To learn about how businesses, big and small, use RPA software, or to conduct your own anticipated ROI using RPA, request a consultation and complimentary Proof-of-Concept with one of our automation experts today.

Sign up for a free demo at
nintex.com/rpa

> About Nintex

The Nintex Process Platform is designed for Ops, IT and business leaders to help their organizations successfully manage, automate and optimize enterprise-wide business processes. Today, more than 8,000 organizations in 90 countries leverage the process management and automation capabilities of the Nintex platform to improve the way people work.

Nintex is the fastest way to build applications, offers the lowest total cost of ownership, and has high customer satisfaction with a net promoter score of 75.

As the leader in Digital Process Automation for Wide Deployments, as cited in The Forrester Wave™ Q1 2019, we welcome the opportunity to discuss your business needs and to show you the complete, powerful and easy-to-use process capabilities of our platform including: *Nintex Promapp®, Nintex Forms & Mobile Apps, Nintex Workflow, Nintex RPA, Nintex Drawloop, Nintex DocGen®, Nintex Sign™ powered by Adobe Sign, and Nintex Analytics.*

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