

Utilization of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) for Inbound Mail



A Madison Advisors Brief
September 2017

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Robotic process automation (RPA) is rapidly becoming a necessary tool for enterprises and service providers to streamline document workflows, manage quality and reduce processing costs. As outlined by the Institute for Robotic Process Automation (IPRA), *“Robotic process automation (RPA) is the application of technology that allows employees in a company to configure computer software or a “robot” to capture and interpret existing applications for processing a transaction, manipulating data, triggering responses and communicating with other digital systems.”*

Historically, process automation oftentimes falls victim to the “iron triangle” of the competing tenants of cost, time and quality. With RPA introduced into the inbound mail processes, all three can be achieved with great success and positive impacts for customers and employees. Optical character recognition (OCR) technology combined with an RPA process provides greater efficiencies and accuracy for capturing data from inbound documents. This reduction in repetitive tasks and the ability to access virtually any application or data source greatly increases quality and customer satisfaction.

According to McKinsey & Company, the potential for efficiency increases for data collection and data processing using RPAs are estimated at 64% and 69% respectively falling behind only repetitive labor tasks. Current technology vendors such as Kofax and Pegasystems are leading the industry in providing RPA solutions for various repetitive, data-based processes. Current technology includes desktop automation that automates routine tasks, but still interfaces directly with users, and full automation that removes all human intervention from the process. The desktop automation tools are the most likely application for inbound mail processing since human involvement is still needed for many of the documents received by an organization in the form of account payables, enrollment forms, claims and general correspondence.

**Robotic Process Automation
(RPA) Efficiency Increases**
Data Collection – 64%
Data Processing – 69%

Source: McKinsey & Company,
The Technical Potential for
Automation in the US

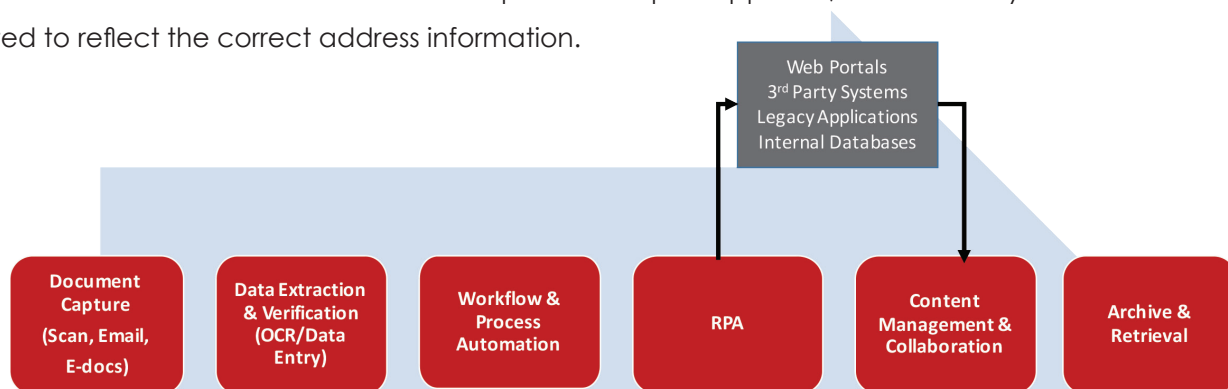
IMPACT & BENEFITS

The benefits of utilizing RPA for inbound mail vary based on the types of documents within the process. At a high level, adopters can expect data capture quality improvements and a reduction of processing and training costs. By having a single view into the information available from multiple data sources, business workflows can be improved increasing employee and customer satisfaction.

Data Capture – RPA users have increased quality of the data captured and faster resolution within various document workflows. Multiple systems can be accessed in an automated data retrieval step with workflow transactions automatically initiated once the data is verified. For example, an inbound invoice can be read and the data captured within a client's accounts payable system. In addition, the RPA could be designed to validate the financial system to evaluate possible duplications, confirm the legitimacy of the charge and move the invoice along through either an automated approval workflow or one requiring human intervention.

Process Integrity – RPA provides the benefits of validation of inbound documents against other systems of record. With data collection and centralization done in an automated process, documents can be collected and organized, and missing information can be identified to streamline a business process. For example, an inbound enrollment form can have the information captured through the OCR engine and populated within a college enrollment system. All the supporting documents can be collected and attached along with the initial enrollment data and applicant's information can be confirmed against internal systems as well as external, public databases containing background information needed for the application to proceed through the process.

Return Mail – An RPA process for managing return mail can be utilized to evaluate the address with external systems such as the national change of address database. Once the address is resolved, a transaction can be initiated for outreach to the intended recipient and upon approval, the internal systems of record can be updated to reflect the correct address information.



Document Capture Workflow

CHALLENGES

Utilizing RPA for inbound mail processes may face challenges presented by legacy manual processes that are dependent on a human with institutional knowledge. In general, RPA implementations are challenged with transforming data from multiple incoming sources and interfacing with multiple internal and external systems. These challenges can be overcome by the technology vendors; however, manual tasks that may be associated with inbound mail processing must be considered.

Adoption & Integration – A key component of the successful implementation of an RPA is for the process to be driven by the business instead of IT. While IT integration is very important, the business owners should oversee the overall process. Technology vendors may provide initial training and set up, but an integration partner should be considered to assist with making RPA a system-wide initiative instead of implementing disjointed applications, thus improving the return on investment (ROI).

Data Exchange & Governance – While an RPA can be built to reach out to virtually any application or data source, compliance concerns may prevent access to internal systems. Organizations typically restrict access to key databases and systems based on user roles and interfacing with a robot can present a challenge within the access governance rules. In addition, enterprise resource planning platforms (ERP) may have complex infrastructures that can make data collection difficult. Implementations should have well thought-out governance and validation processes to ensure that all variations of inbound documents are accounted for in the project planning. Ongoing monitoring and validation should also be planned by business users to validate the results and accuracy of the RPA.

SUMMARY

RPA technology is transforming back office and customer facing processes that organizations rely on to run their businesses. This innovative technology has the potential to break the “iron triangle” and provide organizations with a robust tool that will lower costs, increase cycle time and improve quality of inbound documents. This automation provides huge benefits of increased quality and speed to service; however, enterprises should have realistic expectations of the amount of automation that will be achieved. Inbound mail processes can benefit from RPA due to the speed that data can be retrieved for validation and documents are moved through a desired workflow process, but many inbound documents will still require manual approvals or validation. The impact of RPA within organizations will continue to grow as the technology matures and businesses will benefit from increasing data exchange capabilities. Organizations that are early adopters will be able to take advantage of the benefits of improved processes that lead to greater customer satisfaction and return on investment.

APPENDIX A – ABOUT MADISON ADVISORS

Madison Advisors exists to advance the print and electronic communications objectives of Fortune 1000 companies. Madison Advisors specializes in offering context-specific guidance for a range of content delivery strategies, particularly those addressing enterprise output technologies and customer communications.

Madison Advisors offers services and expertise primarily through short-term, high-impact consulting services. With no-nonsense, quick engagements (measurable in days or weeks, not months), Madison Advisors directly helps our clients achieve very hard and specific return on investment (ROI) related to their print and electronic communications initiatives.

Madison Advisors' analysts are dedicated to technology and market research that is delivered through short-term project engagements as well as articles, publications, and presentations. We specialize in customer communication technologies including enterprise output management, content management, customer relationship management, e-billing, and infrastructure technology.

For more information about Madison Advisors, visit our web site: www.Madison-Advisors.com.

APPENDIX B – ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Cotter

Susan brings over 20 years of experience in consulting in the business communications and business process outsourcing industries to Madison Advisors. With an extensive knowledge of strategic account and data management, Susan is well-versed in customizing solutions for business process re-engineering and the outsourcing of business-critical back office functions using technology to achieve automation. As part of Madison Advisors, Susan has served as a program manager for a large-scale print and mail outsourcing project, coordinating multiple phases of execution and managing the associated risks with both the client and the end customer.

Prior to Madison Advisors, Susan worked as a Client Solutions Executive for EDM Americas for six years, where she oversaw new business development and project management within existing key accounts by driving business process reengineering and developing ROI's for outsourced document management services. Susan also previously served as Vice President of Active Data Services, and was Client Services Manager for Lason Systems Inc.

Susan holds a B.S. in Business Administration from University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.