

Navigating RPA / BPA Journey – Seven Steps for SME Automotive Manufacturers



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1. Process Identification & Prioritization

The Roadmap Begins: Choosing the Right Paths

Before strapping on our automation seatbelts, we need a roadmap. Start by identifying the processes that are ripe for automation. Consider the following:



Volume and Repetition

High-volume, repetitive tasks are prime candidates. Think invoice processing, order fulfillment, ASN, Goods Receipt Note, Delivery note, Tax reconciliation, Accounts reconciliation or inventory management.



Complexity and Error-Prone Areas

Processes with intricate rules, repetitive nature of the job or prone to human error are excellent targets.



Impact on Business Outcomes

Prioritize processes that directly impact customer satisfaction, cost reduction, or revenue growth.

2. Process Assessment and Documentation

Mapping the Terrain: Understanding the Current Landscape

Grab your compass and document existing processes. Understand their twists, turns, and potholes:



As-Is Process Mapping

Visualize the current state. Where are the bottlenecks? What manual steps slow things down?



Pain Points and Variations

Interview process owners and users. Uncover pain points, exceptions, and workarounds.



Process Metrics

Measure cycle times, error rates, and resource utilization.

Process mapping may sometimes need expert help. Your SI can actually deploy tools, for you, to help you map the process, identify the cycle times and also come out with a report. Based on the outcome of the report, you can also re-engineer some of the processes.

3. Business Case Development

Fueling Up: Calculating ROI and Justifying the Trip



Quantify Benefits

Calculate cost savings, error reduction, and increased throughput.



Costs

Estimate implementation costs, including software, training, and SI fees.

For the software licenses, you need to identify if you want a low upfront cost, but high recurring costs as you scale (SAAS) model or a onetime upfront cost with just a Subscription & Support cost every year. In case you prefer the SAAS version, you also need to account for the network bandwidth usage.

For the SI fees – you need to check the one time implementation fees and the annual support fees. This is important, because, your customers could change their software, your software vendors could come out with new versions. Since your core business is manufacturing, you should have the capabilities to help you quickly adapt to the changes. A support contract will help you with that.



Strategic Alignment

Show how Automation solution aligns with the organization's goals. This is critical to get the executive alignment. Every organization has a lot of possible initiatives to undertake, for their business. By being able to align the automation initiative, with the organizational roadmap (cost cutting, becoming more agile, improving quality) , you can get better executive buy-in

*SI - System Integrator

4. Vendor and Solution Selection

Choosing the Right Vehicle: Picking Your Automation tools and service provider / system integrator

Navigate the vendor landscape carefully:



Scalability

Will this solution handle growth? Can it accommodate more processes?



Integration

Ensure seamless integration with existing ERP systems. No one likes a car that won't sync with their phone.



Security and Support

Check under the hood—security features and vendor support matter. A lot of automation projects get derailed because customers end up using “Open Source” tools, where security, scalability and integration capabilities are suspect.

5. Integration with ERP Systems



Data Flow

Ensure data flows seamlessly between RPA/BPA and ERP



Process Handoffs

Define how processes transition from RPA/BPA to ERP and vice versa



Testing and Validation

Test exhaustively. Create multiple use cases and test both for the logic as well as for “stress”

6. Change Management and User Adoption

Buckle Up, Passengers: Navigating the Shift

All automation projects can fail, if the users don't adopt the solution.



Communication

Explain why you are taking this route and how it will help them. Address fears and uncertainties.



Training

Teach users how to drive this new automation solution.



Feedback Loop

Listen to the users—sometimes the users already know the best possible scenarios. Taking their help can help you navigate this journey faster.

Remember! Even the best car won't move without willing drivers.

7. Long-Term Vision and Scalability

Beyond the Horizon: Mapping the Journey Ahead



Strategic Fit

How does the Automation initiative, fit into the grand vision? Sometimes to solve an immediate problem, organizations end up taking point solutions, which later on, hamper the growth of the initiative because they can't be deployed in other areas. If the automation solution can utilize the existing infra and licenses, then the journey becomes even smoother.



Adaptability

Anticipate software updates and changing business needs.



Regular Checkpoints

Review the roadmap periodically. Adjust course if needed.

Remember! The Automation initiative isn't a joyride; it's a cross-country expedition. But at the end of the expedition, your organization will come out stronger with reduced costs and greater agility.

Use Case

Our customer is a Tier-1 supplier to "Off-Road" vehicles. They have 5 plants and warehouses with total employee strength of 3000.



REQUIREMENT

They identified the Advanced Shipping Note (ASN) as their High Impact process to be the first process in the automation journey. They use the Infor ERP.



IMPACT

They decided to use the IBM RPA tool in SAAS mode.

They automated the following sub process:

- ⇒ Order Processing
- ⇒ Delivery Note
- ⇒ ASN generation



RESULT

The result achieved was exhilarated productivity of 12:1. Their process and calculation errors reduced by 32% and cut costs associated with these processes by more than 24%.

Before the start of the automation journey we had helped them identify a series of high impact processes that could be automated to justify the business case for the initiative.