

A people-first automation mindset

How upskilling in automation technologies
can transfer to real business impact

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ProEdge

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Two out of three companies **recently interviewed** say they expect to see a return on their investment for upskilling their employees within one year. Compared to classic top-down methodologies, this is a faster, lower-cost and higher-yielding proposition. Companies leading the way in digital transformation are looking inwards to upskill their employees, especially when it comes to technologies such as robotic process automation (RPA). The impact of the pandemic on digital transformation initiatives, the availability of easy-to-use technology and the backlog of un-automated tasks has made the C-suite prioritize upskilling.

Intelligent automation can be a core component of digital transformation, and employers who adopt that technology are largely satisfied with the results. RPA specifically is a huge time saver and can free up hours to be more innovative collectively—automations perform the tedious and repetitive tasks so your people have more time to be with clients, solve complex problems and more.

RPA has the potential to empower employees to apply automation to their everyday work, so how do we communicate those benefits and relieve any uneasiness around **citizen-led innovation**? We need to examine the quantitative value and return on investment automation can deliver.

“ At PwC, we saw citizen-led automation as the secret sauce to success in our large scale digital transformation, allowing our entire employee base to take a hands-on role in executing change and to focus our centralized efforts on the highest value problems. This resulted in the savings of millions of work hours across the firm, coupled with improved client and employee experience.

– **Kevin Kroen**

Partner, Intelligent Automation and Digital Upskilling Leader, PwC

How Intelligent Automation drives efficiencies and adds value

Highlighting the successes of automation implementation can help make the case for business leaders. IDC's recent whitepaper, co-sponsored by PwC and UiPath ([**A Robot for Every Worker: Are We Ready for a People-First Automation Mindset?**](#)), includes a global research study across North America, Europe and Asia with 431 respondents, working in companies of at least 250 employees from 19 industries.

The benefits of RPA implementation were overwhelmingly positive, with 79% of companies seeing reductions in errors and improved process efficiency, including shorter time to value and improved response to customer speeds. And 69% were able to get rid of low-value, repetitive tasks. Additionally, 77% saw improvements in the quality and consistency of decision-making. Automation technologies can streamline tasks, get people the insights they need faster and free up time for creativity. All of these benefits can contribute to enhanced productivity, more profitability and reduced costs.

[**PwC can confirm the benefits of intelligent automation**](#). For example, the firm has helped clients transform their finance functions. Using RPA and other automation technologies, manual controls become automated controls that operate identically every time. This kind of consistency can help mitigate risk—it's about quality and scalability. PwC has also leveraged intelligent automation to help clients boost operational efficiency and performance by finding the right combination of digital speed and human skill. Finding that balance often involves upskilling, and PwC ran bootcamps for clients to help them empower their employees to become citizen developers, specifically with RPA. This kind of citizen training and engagement can help further unlock the potential of intelligent automation.



Roadblocks to automating the enterprise—and the approach that moves past them

Attitude goes a long way in fostering a culture where innovation can thrive. According to the IDC report, decision makers who don't support end-users' direct involvement in automation work are much more negative about the value of a robot for every worker, with 79% negative and 21% positive.

So how do we shift those attitudes? By demonstrating that a culture where employee involvement with automation is encouraged and supported can get results. Part of building a culture of citizen-led innovative automation comes from careful determination that strikes a balance in process-first and people-first approaches to enterprise-wide problem solving. A process-first approach still tends to work best to tackle issues of end-to-end digitization and widespread inefficiencies. An example of this mindset when applied to RPA implementation would be looking for ways to improve business processes with automation to drive efficiencies. A people-first approach allows for crowdsourcing employees' ideas and talents in ways that can scale. It engages and empowers the end-users of new technologies.

When it comes to realizing the benefits of RPA, a combined process and people approach can improve the overall ROI.



What's needed to achieve adoption?

People-first approaches also hit on talent metrics like retention and employees feeling valued—and even liking their jobs more. Giving workers opportunities to become involved in improving their own productivity can boost adoption of RPA implementation overall. So how involved do workers want to be in automation initiatives? The global IDC research asked workers about their interest in creating their own automations and 25% of respondents were firm in their willingness to get involved, while 38% indicated they might be interested.

The adoption of any new technology takes incentive, assurances and upskilling. When workers in the same study were asked what it would take to get them engaged, 29% said any tools or systems would need to be easy to use. This brings up the question of upskilling to get employees up to speed, and when it came to training, 20% of workers didn't want to go through a lot of technical training. Other concerns were around job security, with 28% of workers looking for assurances that their job wouldn't be completely automated.

Some of the most promising findings came from nearly a quarter of the respondents who said that being able to share ideas with others about what to automate would be a key factor in their participation. There should be a culture of ownership, collaboration and sharing innovation across teams. For that to happen, decision makers need to be on board. In the IDC study group, 80% of the decision makers that have adopted RPA are providing workers with access to RPA tools that enable them to automate their work. Within that group enabling citizen-led innovation, 71% achieved moderate success and 22% rated their program as highly successful.

Establishing centers of excellence to support automation efforts can also help boost adoption, generate ideas, provide mentorship to citizen builders and review digital assets. These centers can also run hackathons and trainings with employees to generate enthusiasm and help learning stick. If everyone gets involved, widespread adoption—and success—is much easier to achieve.

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Embracing the tools and platforms that enable citizen-led automation

When people are involved in deciding where and how to implement automation, the scalability can be impressive. They can use attended RPA to transfer data from one system to another while they actively engage with customers, and for other processes it might make sense to let an unattended bot handle a task that needs no human involvement. Empowering the people closest to the problems with the right tools and training can lead to the best business outcomes.

PwC was one of the eight organizations featured in the IDC study with successful digital transformation programs that included the adoption of a people-first mindset and citizen-led automation. The firm's products team has since applied the learning from PwC's journey to create **ProEdge**, an end-to-end workforce planning and upskilling platform in the market designed for digital business transformation and citizen-led innovation.

“Many of our customers started with unattended automation and have expanded their automation programs to attended (front office) solutions. However, many suggest that if they had to do it again they would actually start in with attended automation because of the instant scale and rapid development that it inherently supports.

– **Brandon Nott**

Senior Vice President of Product, UiPath

The ProEdge platform addresses many of the pain points workers and business leaders experience with RPA implementation. Through ProEdge, learners gain the skills they need to build automations using tools like UiPath. Promoting this kind of skill-building can help balance process-first with people-first approaches. This is about providing the means to upskill at scale—building a workforce and culture that promotes citizen-led innovation that in turn becomes the engine for digital transformation.

The platform starts by assessing skill gaps, including those in RPA and other automation skills. ProEdge then uses data-driven content curation to automatically generate learning pathways relevant to people's roles, functions and industries. This process is tailored to each individual's needs as an entire company engages with the platform. As learners engage with learning pathways, they also have opportunities to experiment and apply newly learned skills. When learners become more competent, they can take courses that offer opportunities to earn credentials.

ProEdge learners can earn credentials in RPA for specific functional areas; for example, Optimizing Tasks with RPA in Finance. People who earn this credential have developed the skills needed to help build an RPA solution to identify and move invoices from a repository to a separate folder, read those invoices and convert invoice amounts to 'raw data'. Then they can automatically classify line items as expense or capital, and visualize results in a dashboard for management purposes. ProEdge also seamlessly integrates UiPath courses into the learning experience, allowing people access to UiPath RPA learning paths from beginner to advanced levels.



Once users have the know-how gained through their project-based learning, they can leverage ProEdge Share to find automations that were built using tools like UiPath. Share is an internal social exchange where employees can find and distribute RPA and other employee-built digital assets across the organization. Share enables citizen-led automation to work at scale and provides the governance guardrails to make that possible. It can become a core piece of your digital infrastructure to make it scale across daily operations.

ProEdge's capabilities align with the patterns of practice from IDC's "Most Mature Organizations" who have achieved the best outcomes and success with RPA, most notably educating employees to be citizen developers.

Platforms like ProEdge can be game changers for automation adoption for lagging businesses. Empowering people with access to tools and the upskilling to leverage them in solving business problems can help transform entire organizations.

“ProEdge is a unique approach to driving digital transformation because it combines hands-on education with leading automation technologies. It is as approachable as it is powerful. And in today's fast paced work environment, companies that empower employees have a competitive edge.

– **Brandon Nott**
Senior Vice President of Product, UiPath

Invest in tomorrow

Stay ahead of the curve with PwC ProEdge, the revolutionary way to upskill your people and prepare your organization for tomorrow. This unique platform allows you to pinpoint critical skill gaps and effectively help close them with automatically generated personalized learning pathways. Leading curated content, coursework and hands-on learning empower your workforce to make an immediate impact at scale. ProEdge enables your people to perform at their highest level—giving them the power to help transform your entire organization.

Learn more at ProEdge.PwC.com



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