Automating from the core
How we helped a utility company take process automation to the next level

**Challenge:** Our client wanted to reinvent the way they do things instead of just automating inefficient processes.

**Approach:** We collaborated with the organization’s automation center of excellence (CoE) to understand current gaps and develop a customized training program so that our client’s automation projects could be delivered without the usual pain points.

**Outcome:** Our client is now able to assess its entire IT ecosystem and understand how automation is integrated within the wider organizational strategy. We also helped them shift their mindset to view automation as a collaborative effort to improve and reimagine operations.

It’s more challenging than ever for companies to achieve a competitive advantage amid unprecedented uncertainties caused by COVID-19. That, combined with an aging workforce in the power and utilities industry, is driving many companies to turn to automation to help transform and simplify their operations for the future.

When our client, a large utility company, first set out on this journey, they were relying on general guidance and off-the-shelf solutions. And, while their previous vendor was providing good service on the technology side, the vendor wasn’t questioning the client’s current processes or finding opportunities for continuous improvement, nor was the vendor customizing solutions to fit the client’s specific needs and culture.

Frustrated by operational inefficiencies and their inability to reinvent the way they do things, our client wanted an experienced service provider to help implement industry leading practices and explore new ways of operating. So, we were selected as their new strategic adviser.

Reinventing the way things are done instead of just automating inefficient processes.
Organizations across every sector and geography are grappling with what automation is and how to best use automated technologies to achieve their strategic goals. Integrating automation at the heart of the business can help increase efficiency, profitability, and growth—allowing organizations to better adjust to challenges and focus on new growth opportunities.
Taking a step back

Our client had initially designed a lot of processes to address more immediate business needs without considering the wider implications of change for operations and people. But, like some companies do, they took more of a “set it and forget it” approach without regularly revisiting those processes and making adjustments.

And while automation can go a long way to help organizations improve their operations, they may be missing a big opportunity by just blindly automating existing processes without removing non-value-add activities and reimagining processes to improve overall operations for business users.

Finding areas for improvement

To make sure our client achieved the most benefit from automation, we first aimed to understand how automation fit within their organizational strategy and culture. To create a baseline and better evaluate each process, we consulted every party involved to understand their automation literacy levels, current pain points, and automation ambition.

We worked with our client’s automation CoE—covering various business functions, including customer service, field operations, finance, internal controls, and trading—to understand how it interacted with business users, noting challenges and areas where a customized approach could be beneficial.

Once we understood the gaps between the CoE and functional teams, we developed and delivered a customized training program to help the client deliver automation projects without the usual pain points, such as performance, reporting, and inefficient processes. We also educated the client’s internal process architects and developers on how to reimagine processes and focus on value-added activities while also addressing common challenges across the organization.

Through this approach, we enabled the client to shift their mindset across the organization. They now view automation as a collaborative effort to improve and reimagine operations, which also creates more time for value-add activities.

Advancing to the next level of automation

Our client is now able to assess their entire IT ecosystem and understand how automation is integrated within their wider organizational strategy, reducing pain points that had affected their functional business partners. This project has given them visibility into the ROI of their processes that were lacking before and has increased user adaption and overall experience.

But this is only just the beginning. We’re continuing to work with our client to help them advance on their automation journey, now moving toward intelligent automation and the expanded use of machine learning and artificial intelligence.