



**Gina Schaefer**

Managing Director  
Deloitte Consulting LLP  
gschaefer@deloitte.com

Gina has more than 20 years of experience in full-cycle service delivery model transformation and shared services, supporting organizations from concept and business case through implementation and optimization. She has served a range of clients and industries, including life sciences, health care, consumer products, manufacturing, retail, and insurance. Gina is a leader in Deloitte's Robotic and Cognitive Process Automation practice and understands the complexities of integrating change management, technology, and processes.



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USServiceDelivery-Transformation@deloitte.com



## The value of robotic process automation in shared services

Repetitive, manual tasks are monotonous for humans and cumbersome for businesses. Robotic Process Automation (RPA) helps automate processes, allowing early adopters in service delivery and GBS to achieve cost efficiencies and create more nimble and competitive businesses. At the same time, quality increases while workers free up to perform higher-level tasks and analysis.

### What should GBS and shared services organizations know about RPA, and why is it important?

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) replaces functions once performed by humans with software-driven robots that help speed processes and drive quality. Organizations are trying to determine the best way to apply RPA to their processes and when to get started if they haven't already done so.

Whether they are investigating RPA or initiating a pilot to test its value, shared services and GBS organizations should consider working cross-functionally to define a path forward that benefits the business and its employees. Developing a comprehensive stakeholder management program at the outset can help ensure buy in, especially from senior management and IT stakeholders.

GBS and shared services leaders should also be sure they're applying RPA to the right processes and activities. These processes must have readily definable rules and incorporate digital data in order for RPA to deliver an improvement. Decisions around the testing and monitoring of these robots across large data sets should be made before putting them into production. In fact, most organizations ease RPA into production gradually so that they can monitor quality and user experience before driving wider adoption.

### How can organizations separate fact from fiction when it comes to RPA?

As with any technology, there are misconceptions over what RPA is and isn't, and what it can and can't do. Here's a way to separate fact from fiction:

#### **Fiction: RPA is a new concept.**

**FACT:** Automation is not a new concept. It has been around for decades in GBS and shared services. However, cloud computing and other technology advancements have enabled the expansion of RPA. While there is value to be had, beware the hype.

#### **Fiction: RPA is a once-and-done solution.**

**FACT:** As things change, organizations have to help employees through the change. It's similar with automation. You have to help the automation adapt over time to changes in its environment.

#### **Fiction: RPA is a plug-and-play technology.**

**FACT:** RPA is a business-driven solution requiring a high degree of collaboration. Deciding how to orchestrate RPA between business and IT should be addressed upfront.

#### **Fiction: Robots are not always faster than humans.**

**FACT:** A robot can often run through a series of tasks in a fraction of time it takes a human, but that's not always the case. For RPA to run optimally, you have to know how to apply it, apply

it correctly, and manage expectations. Humans can make decisions around processes and their exceptions quickly, while robots may need to evaluate a broad set of criteria and scenarios to choose the proper course of action. Additionally, once businesses see firsthand the power of RPA, they tend to expand the scope and thoroughness of the task well beyond what the humans historically have been able to accomplish. While in this example the automation may be slower than the human, the robot is delivering a multiple of the human output.

#### **Fiction: RPA replaces humans.**

**FACT:** In some cases, automation can replace a full-time position. Often, however, RPA represents a more symbiotic relationship, where the robot tackles the mundane and error-prone tasks that humans often dislike. This frees up workers to manage more complex exceptions and focus time and value-add activities.

#### **Where is the value in RPA – Can it deliver beyond the hype?**

RPA can deliver substantial productivity, cost, and quality benefits in GBS. The value of robotics process automation usually begins with the cost and productivity savings from automating repetitive and rules-based processes. Because robots are scalable, additional robotic workers can be applied to a task to address peaks in demand and work 24x7 – all at a ninth of the cost of a full-time, onshore employee<sup>1</sup>.

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The real value of RPA, though, is when we can combine it with cognitive methods that emulate human decision making. Applying predictive analytics, machine learning, and other models to RPA – that's where the biggest impact will likely be, the biggest value in both managing back office processing and generating higher level insights. Applying and governing RPA correctly and combining the outcomes with the experience of trained data scientists, that's the next order of value.

#### **What are some talent considerations?**

Because of its very nature, RPA can present significant talent challenges – not least of which is that people who figure out how to use this technology and get good at it will likely be in demand in the marketplace and can be taken away by competitors.

Also, workers often approach RPA with suspicion: "Are the robots coming for my job?" If you don't help the business users understand what RPA is and understand the value to them personally, they may remain threatened by it, which can cause poor user adoption and automations that don't realize their full potential. So beyond training, a culture shift is necessary, driven, and supported by leadership to help the human resource embrace the benefits of automation.

While organizations can spend significant time and investment in RPA, if they don't change the culture in ways that encourage business users to embrace it – and really understand how to work with it – its impact will be diminished. So aligning business users and their expectations with the benefit of RPA is one of the most important things GBS and shared services leaders can do to help ensure success.

<sup>1</sup> The Robots Are Coming, Deloitte, 2015 <http://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/finance/deloitte-uk-finance-robots-are-coming.pdf>

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