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CAN ROBOTS HELP YOUR BUSINESS?

One of the fastest growing segments of the software market today is Robotic Process Automation (RPA). According to experts, the development of this area will not slow down in the coming years and further growth is expected. Organizations increasingly appreciate RPA's ability to automate routine human tasks involving data processing. Slovak enterprises share this view.

Business Services Centers (BSCs) and Shared Service Centers (SSCs) are an ideal candidate for automation. Since they aggregate a huge number of repetitive activities in other regions, they have an enormous potential to optimize these processes. The centers focusing on financial services can serve as an example, as they provide many processes aggregated from the entire world into one place on a daily basis, and these can be easily automated. For example, we helped one such center, Clarios (previously known as Johnson Controls Power Solutions), to automate selected processes in various localities across the globe, including the processing of outstanding payments, the entering of credit and debit transactions into accounts, the cleaning up of accounting books, and the automation of communication with the client portal.

AUTOMATION AS A HELP FOR BSCS

BSCs generate many operations which are part of procure-to-pay or order-to-pay processes that can be easily automated, like the processing of incoming invoices, orders, delivery notes, payments, remittances, issuing of invoices, credit notes, collecting receivables, or processing reports. All these processes are comprised of partial operations, such as entering data or documents into systems, extracting data from documents, as well as data matching, validation or verification. These are labor intensive operations for staff as they require extensive and time consuming clicking in various systems, downloads, uploads or data controls. Robotization can do this without human interference.

We must not forget another important thing. Streamlining processes enables the Slovak divisions of BSCs to successfully compete within the whole group and thus to gain a better position internationally.

HOW WAS THE IMPLEMENTATION IN CLARIOS CARRIED OUT?

The implementation began with a comprehensive analysis including process, technological and business expertise. This audit identified processes most suited for RPA. Then, software robots were developed and deployed by our Soitron team as a service - i.e. it is a fully outsourced solution, which includes technology services, software licenses, and hardware infrastructure as well as the robot monitoring and maintenance of the software robots.

On average, it presently takes us one and a half to two months to automate a process – with simpler ones taking less than a month. This model is convenient and hassle-free for the client due to the sites being located in different geographical locations. The customer has a well-protected and secured technology infrastructure, and we had to meet stringent security requirements.

DISTANCE IS NOT A BARRIER

Today, Soitron automates processes worldwide for Clarios – from South Korea to Mexico and North America. There are other projects in the pipeline in China and in Latin America.

Building a regional presence in Mexico, we have established our own team to serve the needs of our clients in the entire South American region. We are currently managing our Asian projects remotely from Slovakia, but we are ready to create a dedicated team in the region if the demand for services grows.

BENEFITS AND BOLD PLANS

The robotic process automation implemented so far has brought Clarios a net time saving of twenty-four hours per day for all processes, replacing manual tasks for three employees in total.

"For instance, one person had to send daily reports and seek permissions to unlock orders, which took up to 60 % of their time. Substitutability was also an issue. If the employee was on vacation, another person had to be assigned to handle the process. Since the automation, the substitutability for these tasks is no longer an issue, and the employee has been freed up to focus on more complex tasks with a higher added value," explains Roman Šustek, the IT Business Relationship Manager at Clarios.

In Clarios, the success rate of our software robots was more than 95 percent. They helped the company to save time, reduce the error rate, solve employee substitutability, save costs, improve cash-flow and, last but not least, to increase the satisfaction of customers as well as employees.

THE FUTURE OF RPA

A clear trend in RPA is outsourcing – a company has a robot deployed by an implementer and runs it in the cloud. This ensures data security as well as smooth operation in the client environment. This trend is going to grow in the near future. Another thing we are seeing when it comes to process automation is the merging of different technologies into one intelligent hyperautomation. This is happening through automated process mapping and combined robot + human solutions. Unlike before, when people were concerned about losing their jobs due to automation, with major staff shortages on the job market and companies having difficulties finding any employees at all (with a few exceptions, companies do not lay off their staff), we can be happy that robots can now do the work of multiple employees.

SOME FIGURES ABOUT RPA BASED ON OUR EXPERIENCE

- Automation can save 60 to 80 % of operational costs.
- The fastest return on investment was two months after the solution was deployed; however, the average time is usually six months to 1.5 years.
- When it comes to invoice processing, the robot saves up to 60 % of the employee's working time. In absolute terms, this means that it can register up to 37 more invoices per hour.
- Routine tasks can be reduced and productivity can be increased by up to 80 %.
- One robot is capable of taking over the routine tasks of up to five people.