Everest Group®

Scaling Automation across the Enterprise

The Importance of a Big-picture View of Automation

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Executive Summary

Enterprises have been leveraging automation in fits and starts over the last several years. However, its adoption rose significantly over the last couple of years due to high pressure on bottom lines, rising competition, and evolving consumer behaviors, so much so that automation has become a strategic priority for enterprises in the post-pandemic world. Enterprises that do not have a strong automation vision and are leveraging Intelligent Automation (IA), or the ecosystem of next-generation technologies, for just a handful of business processes will be deprived of the wide-ranging benefits it offers.

Enterprises that have achieved significant success with IA have a broad automation vision and have scaled IA to multiple business functions. They look beyond rules-based automation and leverage an array of IA technologies to automate judgment-intensive tasks and create a healthy pipeline of automation processes. Having the right vision and approach for IA helps enterprises scale it across the organization and fast-track desired outcomes.

To become future-ready, enterprises should transform their business functions from end to end with the help of IA technologies instead of modernizing in silos. A transformed business function that leverages both digital workers and human agents makes processes more efficient, reduces turnaround time, and enhances customer and employee experience.

However, scaling automation across an organization is easier said than done. In this transformation journey, enterprises face challenges such as the lack of leadership buy-in, unrealistic expectations, the lack of a structured governance and operating model, and the inability to create and sustain a strong automation pipeline. Mature enterprises that have successfully overcome these challenges to scale automation programs follow certain best practices, which we describe in this viewpoint.

This research examines:

- The intelligent automation ecosystem
- Enterprise automation vision
- How enterprises can transform different business functions through automation
- How enterprises can scale automation across functions

The research will benefit:

- Digital transformation and automation leaders
- Executives in charge of optimizing business processes
- Chief operating officers and other business heads responsible for improving operations

Introduction to IA

Enterprises globally are facing unprecedented pressure to reduce costs, optimize operations, and enhance customer and employee experience in a post-pandemic landscape characterized by financial stress, changing customer behaviors, increasing competition, and evolving business models. To combat these challenges and become future-ready, enterprises have accelerated the adoption of IA, which is an ecosystem of next-generation technologies – such as Robotic Process Automation (RPA), Machine Learning (ML), computer vision, Natural Language Processing (NLP), process mining, and orchestration – that automates both transaction-/rules-based and judgment-intensive tasks.

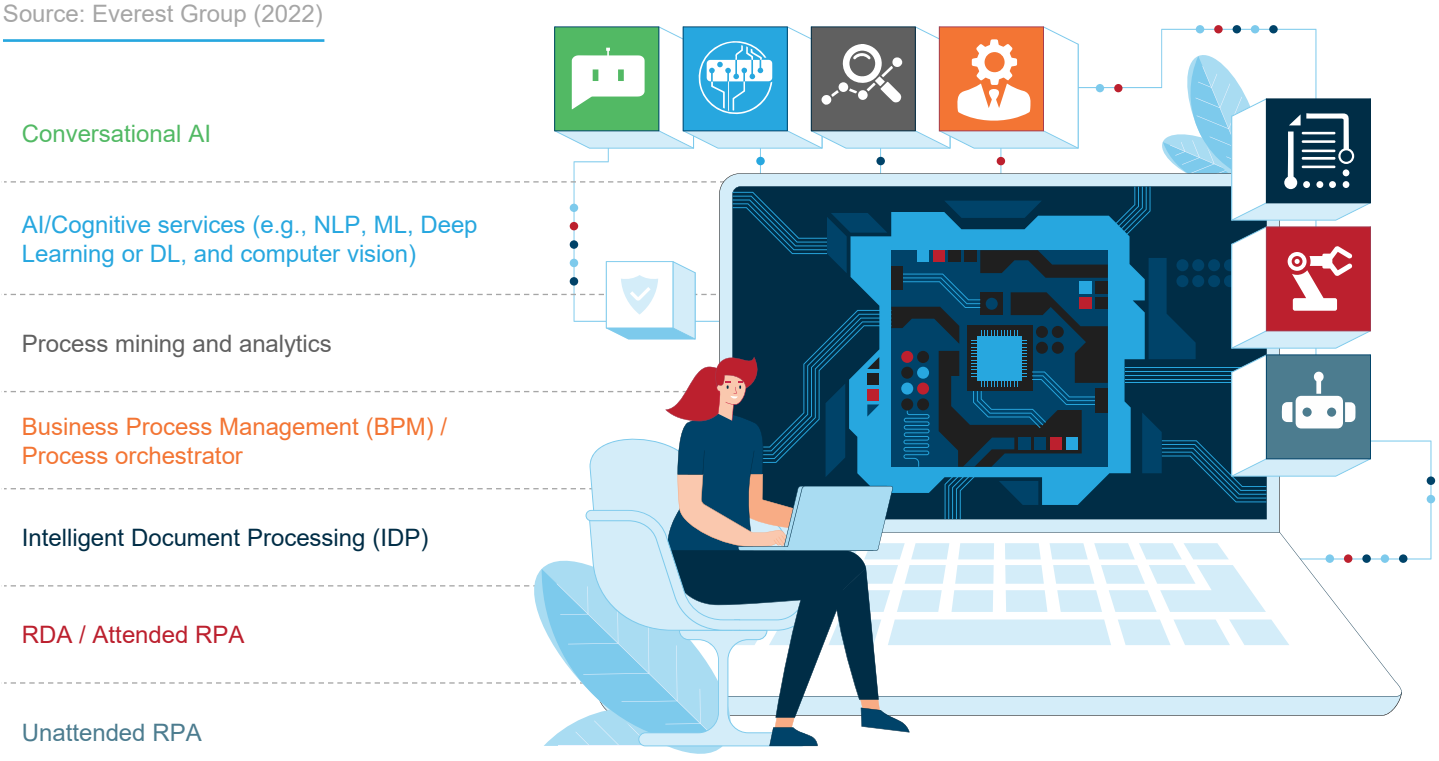
While most enterprises began their automation journeys with RPA, they are now looking beyond RPA, which primarily helps automate rules-based tasks, to automate judgment-intensive tasks using cognitive automation. The convergence of these technologies produces automation capabilities that can learn or improve performance over time.

The exhibit below depicts the components of the IA ecosystem.

EXHIBIT 1

Components of the IA ecosystem

Source: Everest Group (2022)



Today, many enterprises are scaling their automation journeys beyond the initial use cases after realizing that limited automation in a few use cases or functions will not suffice in an automation-first world. In fact, enterprises that scale up automation rapidly achieve significantly higher outcomes than those that leverage IA for a limited number of use cases. Having the right vision and approach to IA will help enterprises get the results they expect more quickly.

Nearly three-fourths of enterprises over a year into their automation journeys have started to leverage IA for more than four processes.

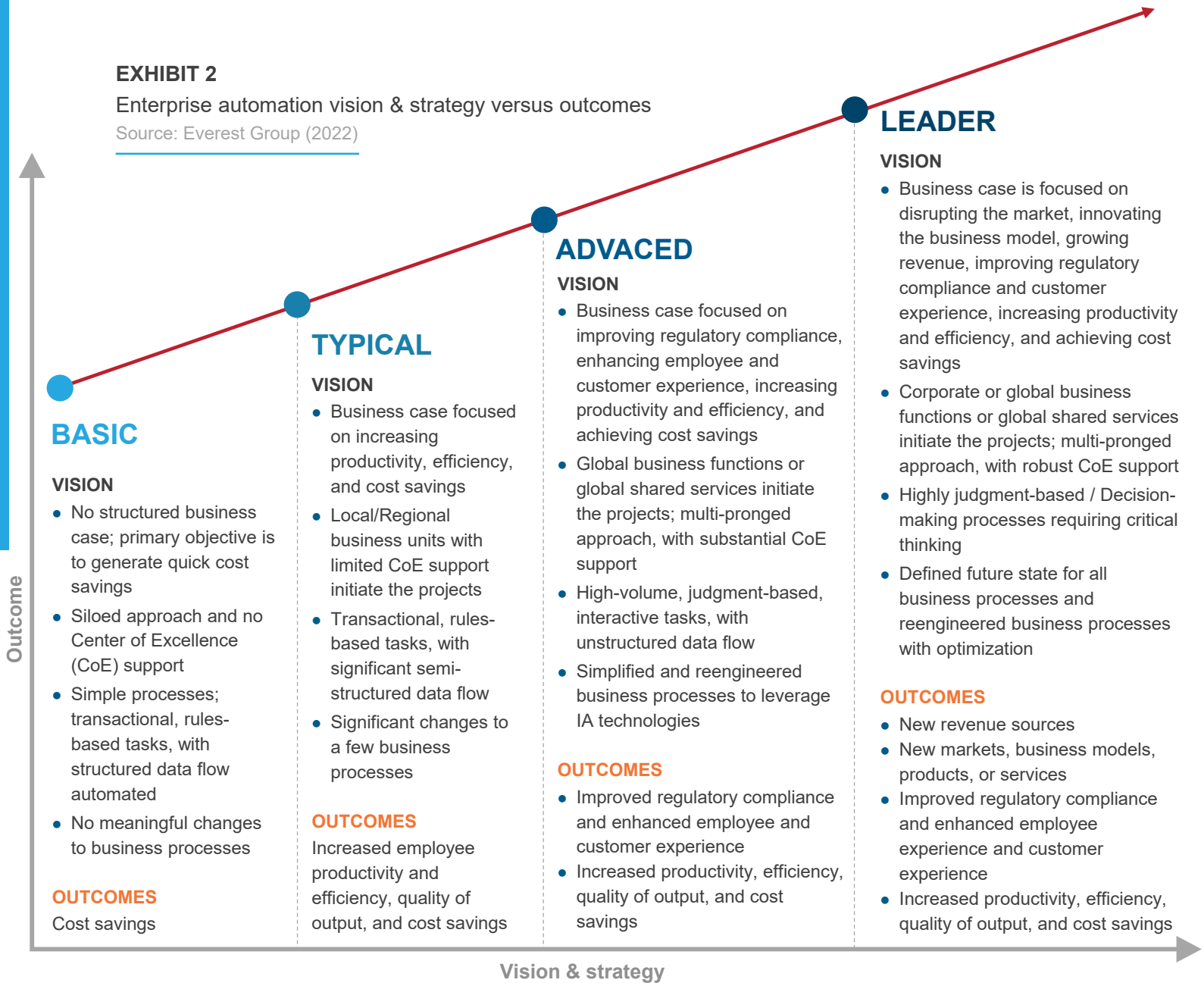
Enterprise automation vision

According to Everest Group's Intelligent Automation Pinnacle Model, enterprises can be at different levels of maturity in terms of their vision and strategy with respect to their automation initiatives. Exhibit 2 below describes how the different maturity levels impact the potential outcomes that an enterprise is able to achieve through the automation program.

EXHIBIT 2

Enterprise automation vision & strategy versus outcomes

Source: Everest Group (2022)



Enterprises at the Basic maturity level might focus on generating quick savings by automating transactional rules-based processes without redesigning or simplifying the actual processes. These enterprises might follow a siloed approach to automation in specific functions, without a CoE to govern and drive the programs. This will typically result in sub-optimal outcomes from the initiative.

In contrast, enterprises that are Leaders in their automation maturity levels, develop business cases aimed at disrupting the market, creating new business models, growing revenue, and improving customer and employee experience, in addition to generating cost savings and improving productivity. Leaders follow a multi-pronged approach and receive robust support from an automation CoE to drive automation across the entire organization. They target not just simple processes, but also domain-centric, customer-centric, and content-centric processes, as well as highly judgment-based activities. Their strategies leverage an array of automation technologies, including cognitive automation capabilities and tools such as process mining and task mining, to build a robust automation pipeline. Leaders also reimagine and reengineer the overall business processes in a way that enables them to implement automation at scale.

Enterprises may evolve in their maturity levels following different paths and at varied pace. Certain enterprises might follow a staggered approach, evolving slowly from one level to the next, while others may directly aim for a Leaders-led transformative approach. The automation program's pace of evolution can depend on various factors, such as the organizational structure, sensitivity to change, technology savviness, and risk appetite.

However, truly transformational outcomes are possible only for those enterprises that have reached the maturity level of Leaders in their automation journeys. Findings of an Everest Group enterprise survey reveal that Leaders achieved 2.3X higher RoI and 3.7X more cost savings than other enterprises.

Leaders whose vision encompasses enterprise-wide transformation achieved **60% higher impact** in strategic areas, such as employee experience, top-line growth, customer satisfaction, and time-to-market, compared to other enterprises.

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Notably, IA is an evolving market, with technology capabilities and potential outcomes continuing to expand with time. Hence, even enterprises that are currently Leaders in terms of their automation maturity will need to continuously evolve to adapt to the changing landscape.

In the next section, we look at how enterprises can transform different business functions with automation, highlighting IA's applications across processes in Finance & Accounting (F&A), Human Resources (HR), Supply Chain Management (SCM), and customer support. We also describe how enterprises can leverage the broad spectrum of automation technologies, beyond RPA, to achieve greater outcomes in these processes, including mature functions such as F&A.

Transforming business functions through automation

Finance & Accounting (F&A) transformation

The F&A function deals with high volumes of data that is transactional, repetitive, and error-prone. Significant manual effort is required to process this data, with tasks that are mundane and non-value adding. Additionally, the F&A function struggles with several challenges due to the following inefficient processes:

- Missing payments causing delays and loss of early payment discounts
- Incorrect overcharging or undercharging of customers
- Reduced employee productivity due to data being held in multiple databases or spreadsheets
- Delayed and inconsistent reporting to the senior management, resulting in poor decision-making and planning
- Inability to effectively counter fraudulent transactions
- High turnaround time due to manual processing
- Sub-optimal cashflow
- Delayed period-end close

IA can play a key role in addressing these challenges and reducing the manual effort involved, as described below.

Automation applications across F&A processes

F&A processes can leverage a combination of different IA technology elements, such as RPA, IDP, conversational AI, and workflows, to reduce manual intervention and increase the efficiency of the overall process. Some of the key processes in which IA can play a key role are described in the exhibit on the next page.

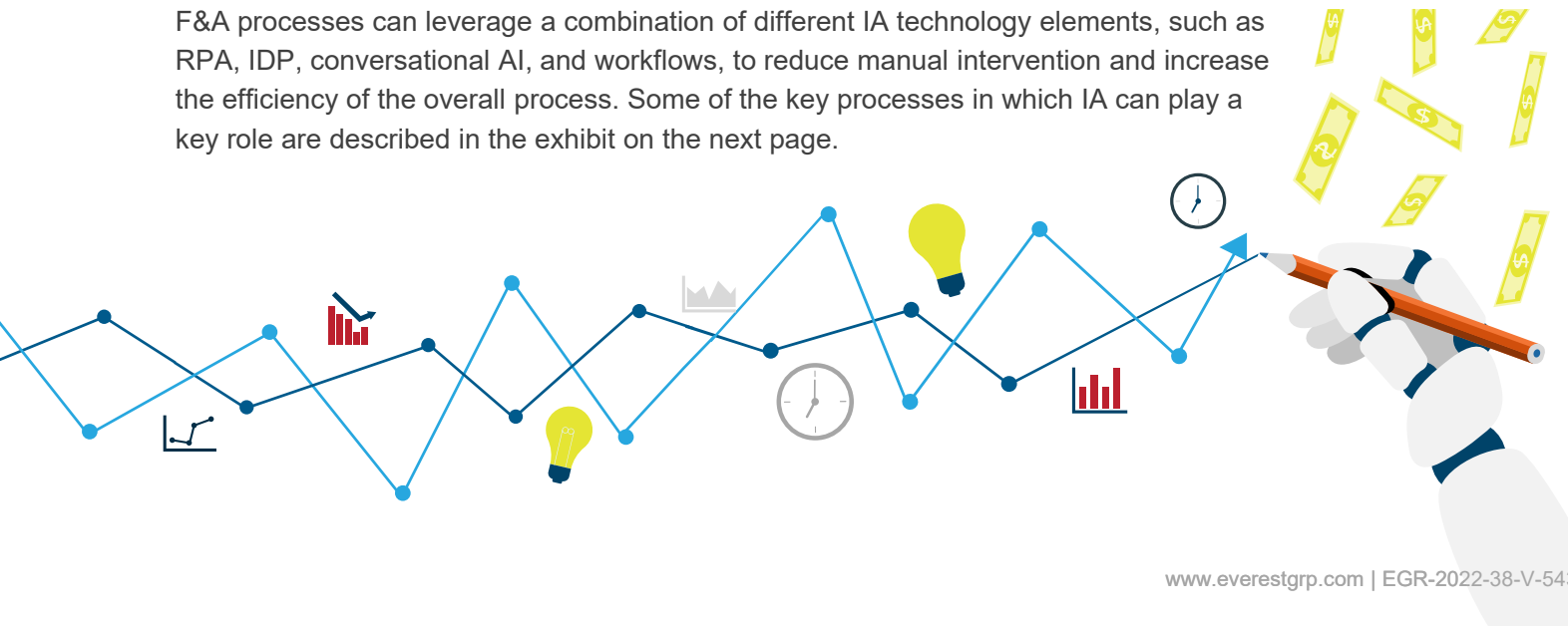


EXHIBIT 3

Applications of IA across F&A processes

Source: Everest Group (2022)

Process	Role of automation	Technology elements	Potential business benefits
Invoice processing	• Fetch data from invoices and send to downstream applications • Validate fetched data from invoices • Perform three-way matching of invoices with purchase orders and receipts • Approve/reject invoices based on business rules • Send acknowledgements	• RPA • IDP • Orchestration • AI/ML models for exception handling	• Timely payment of invoices to vendors • Reduced error rates in invoice processing • Shorter turnaround time • Improved efficiencies
Time and expense claims processing	• Monitor for new expenses and send data to downstream applications • Extract and validate data receipts against expense rule policies • Send automatic acknowledgements • Fraud detection	• RPA • IDP • Advanced analytics	• Enhanced employee experience • Adherence to company policies • Cost savings due to fraud detection • Employees can focus on productive work
Payment processing requests and collections	• Reduce duplicate payments • Automatic payment workflows based on payment terms • Send automatic reminders and acknowledgements • Days Sales Outstanding (DSO) and Days Payable Outstanding (DPO) optimization • Predict customers' payment behavior to take proactive actions	• Prescriptive and predictive analytics • RPA	• Improved working capital • Optimized cashflow • Reduced losses due to duplicate payments
Customer/ Vendor set-up and enquiries	• Automate KYC • Handle customer enquiries and requests related to discrepancies in invoicing, billing, and payments	• RPA • IDP • Conversational AI	• Enhanced customer/vendor experience • Shorter onboarding time • Faster resolution of customer queries
Journal entries processing and account reconciliations	• Fetch data from several enterprise solutions and enter them into the general ledger • Fetch data from bank statements and match with the general ledger • Flag any gaps between the bank statement and the general ledger	• RPA • IDP • AI/ML	• Timely completion of month-end closing • Improved process efficiencies

Below we examine IA's role in invoice processing, leveraging a wider range of automation technologies to deliver better outcomes.

Use case in F&A: invoice processing

Enterprises need to process, review, and validate a large number of invoices from various sources. They can leverage several IA elements for end-to-end optimization of invoice processing:

- Businesses can use RPA to retrieve invoices and deploy IDP for processing. RPA can also help retrieve purchase orders and order receipts. IDP can extract relevant data from invoice

documents and assist in three-way matching with purchase orders and receipts. After the approval of invoices, RPA can send payment acknowledgements to suppliers

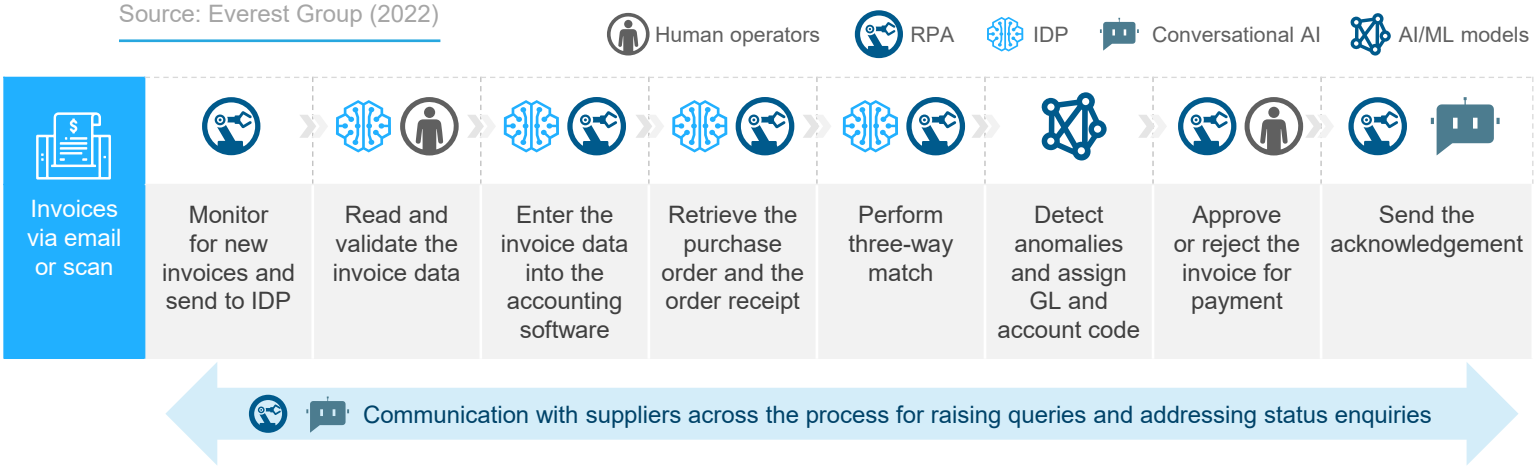
- In addition, enterprises can deploy ML models to detect anomalies, such as when the invoice amount is significantly different from the general trend. Anomaly detection can help identify data elements that do not follow the trend and detect fraudulent invoices. Further, ML models can automate activities such as identifying the right General Ledger (GL) and account codes and assignment of approvers
- Conversational AI can help automate some of the supplier communications, such as clarifications and acknowledgements

Exhibit 4 represents a potentially transformed state of this process. It should be noted that the human element continues to play a vital role in handling exceptions and addressing more judgment-intensive actions, such as approvals for large amounts or complex cases.

EXHIBIT 4

Future state of invoice processing using IA elements

Source: Everest Group (2022)



Supply Chain Management (SCM) transformation

COVID-19-led disruptions have underscored the importance of an efficient and resilient SCM function within organizations. Many enterprises have struggled to deal with drastic shifts in the supply chain landscape and are still trying to catch up to market shifts. Inefficiencies in SCM processes, some of which are listed below, have further exacerbated these challenges:

- Heavy reliance on manual processes in order management
- More than 20 touch points for an order to be processed
- Unintegrated processes across different order sources, such as the web, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), calls, emails, and fax
- Limited inventory visibility and updates, including in-store, transit, and returns
- Poor after-sales customer experience due to the high processing time of claims and returns

IA can play a big role in addressing these inefficiencies and provide greater visibility and agility in dealing with supply-related disruptions. Through careful execution, enterprises can scale automation across supply chain processes to improve bottom lines and enhance customer experience.

Automation applications across SCM processes

Below we describe IA's role across SCM processes such as order management, inventory management, and several after-sales support processes.

EXHIBIT 5

Applications of IA across SCM processes

Source: Everest Group (2022)

Process	Role of automation	Technology elements	Potential business benefits
Order management and fulfillment	• Automatically read and validate details from order documents • Fetch data from order receipts and upload to the order management system • Read and verify the order receipt with the product receipt • Consolidate receipts for order shipment • Check inventory records and give the go ahead for shipments • Send acknowledgement to customer	• RPA • IDP • Conversational AI	• Timely order deliveries • Reduced error rates • Reduced time between receiving ordering and fulfillment • Improved efficiencies • Enhanced customer experience
Inventory management	• Predict optimal inventory levels by considering historical data • Regularly notify managers about product stock levels • Automatically reorder products that go below a certain threshold • Track and deal with dead-stock	• RPA • AI/ML models • Computer vision	• Avoids or limits the risk of stock-outs • Reduces lead times • Increases visibility into the supply chain • Expedites the resolution of inventory discrepancies
Claims management	• Extract data from claims receipts and send it to downstream applications • Consolidate data from different sources for claims verification • Verify claims with contracts/policies • Communicate on queries or status with customers	• RPA • IDP • Conversational AI • AI/ML models	• Faster resolution of claims • Increased process efficiencies • Fewer errors • Superior after-sales customer experience
Warranty management	• Facilitate self-service of warranty contract registration • Match warranty claims with warranty documents • Orchestrate field-failure analysis and reporting • Gather data from different data sources to assist human agent/s with warranty claims • Automate warranty renewals	• RPA • IDP • Conversational AI • Analytics	• Lower warranty costs • Improved warranty management process • Superior after-sales customer experience
Returns management	• Authorize straight-forward returns • Document management of returns/repair • Schedule and track returns • Initiate updates to the inventory and customer billing • Initiate refunds	• RPA • IDP • Conversational AI • Analytics	• Streamlines reverse logistics operations processes • Expedites the return process • Improves after-sales customer experience

Below we look at IA's role in transforming order management and fulfillment in SCM.

Use case in SCM: order management and fulfillment

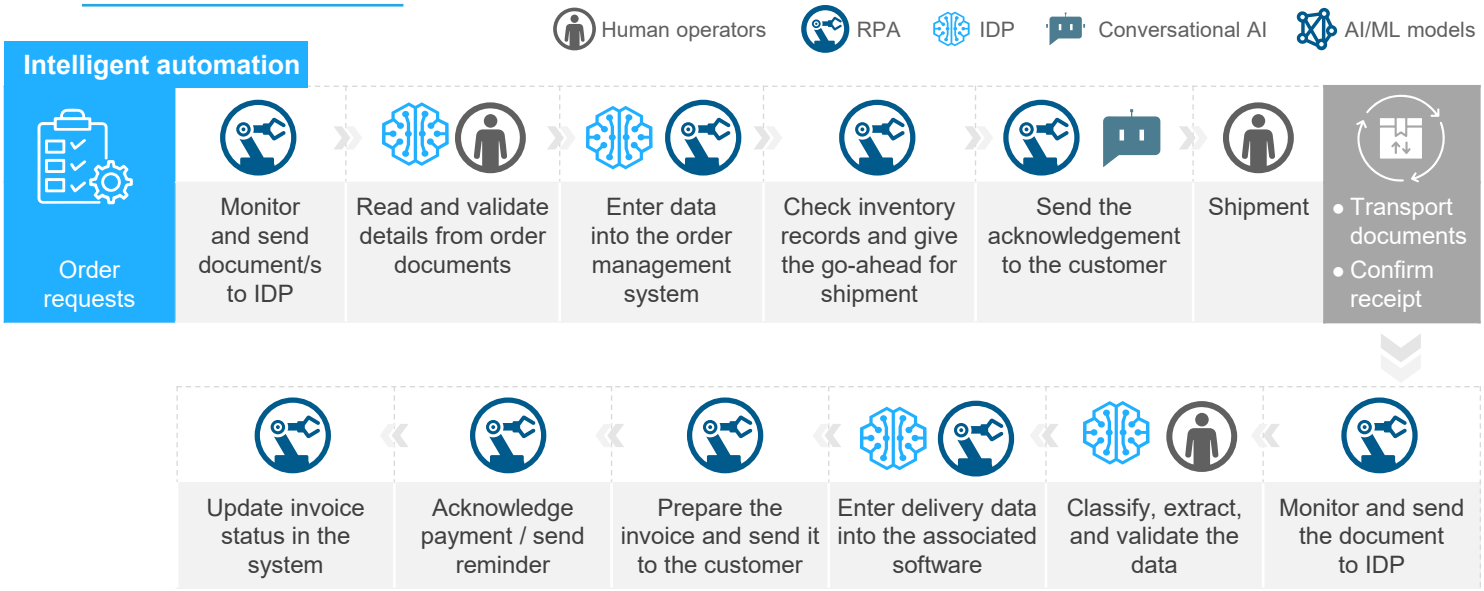
The order management and fulfillment process involves a high volume of transactions, a well-defined process flow, limited need for domain expertise, and manual review of several types of documents. A combination of RPA and IDP can streamline the process and reduce manual intervention.

When customers raise order requests, RPA can monitor incoming requests and feed them into the IDP solution, which can fetch data from receipts and upload it to the order management system with RPA's help. Several other tasks, such as verifying order receipts with product receipts, consolidating receipts for order shipment, and regularly checking inventory records, can also be automated through RPA and IDP, as illustrated below.

EXHIBIT 6

Future state of order management using IA elements

Source: Everest Group (2022)



Human Resources (HR) transformation

HR is a vital business function for every enterprise. However, due to the high volumes of transactional and repetitive activities, paperwork, and manual intervention in several processes, the function struggles with several challenges, such as:

- Inordinately long hiring and onboarding time
- Poor hiring and onboarding experience
- Low efficiency
- Increased number of errors due to transactional, mundane, and repetitive tasks
- High cost of hiring
- Inefficiencies in payroll, recruitment, and onboarding processes

The extreme talent shortage after the pandemic has exacerbated these challenges. IA can help enterprises streamline HR processes, reduce inefficiencies and cost of operations, and enable teams to focus on more valuable work by reducing manual processing, as described below.

Automation applications across HR processes

Below we describe some of the key processes for which enterprises can leverage various IA technology elements, such as RPA, IDP, conversational AI, and AI/ML models, to automate their HR functions.

EXHIBIT 7

Applications of IA across HR processes

Source: Everest Group (2022)

Process	Role of automation	Technology elements	Potential business benefits
Recruitment	• Gather candidates' data from various portals; shortlist and rank candidates based on their skills and experience • Interact with candidates in real-time, answer their queries, and conduct screening interviews • Automatically place recruitment advertisements • Automatically generate offer letters • Track the success rate and productivity of recruiter and hiring manager	• RPA • IDP • Conversational AI • AI/ML models • Analytics	• Reduces time to hire • Enhances candidates' and HR employee experience • Resolves candidates' queries 24x7 • Improves efficiency and quality of hiring
Employee onboarding	• Collect e-signed forms and automatically generate official PDF documents • Create automatic notification and approval workflows • Create accounts on different software without waiting for IT support • Resolve queries of new hires in real-time	• RPA • IDP • Conversational AI • NLP	• Shortens employee onboarding life cycle • Minimizes paperwork • Enhances onboarding experience • Reduces manual intervention and human errors • Reduces the workload of the HR team
Payroll	• Verify time-sheets and reconcile vacation balance • Automate the process for build-to-gross, gross-to-net, and net-to-pay • Intermittent and ad hoc changes to records in the payroll • Month-end reconciliations of payroll records • Detect variances and anomalies • Report payroll tax, labor cost, compliance, and pay insights • Automate paycheck creation, reimbursement, and benefits allocation • Handle pay-slip contact center queries	• RPA • IDP • Conversational AI • AI/ML models	• More efficient and agile payroll process • Reduced errors in payroll processing • Automated data entry • Reduced delays • Improved employee experience

EXHIBIT 7 (continued)
Applications of IA across HR processes
Source: Everest Group (2022)

Process	Role of automation	Technology elements	Potential business benefits
Learning & Development (L&D)	• Track and recommend personalized learning courses using AI/ML, depending on past training, career aspirations, and role availability • Enable employee training in the flow-of-work using self-service capabilities • Conduct training programs for employees through an interactive and engaging learning environment supported by conversational AIs • Leverage AI-powered simulations to train and assess employees	• RPA • Conversational AI • AI/ML models	• Targeted training of employees • Enhanced learning experience • Assistance in internal recruitment • Enhanced employee skill sets

We look at IA's role in transforming the employee onboarding process below.

Use case in HR management: employee onboarding

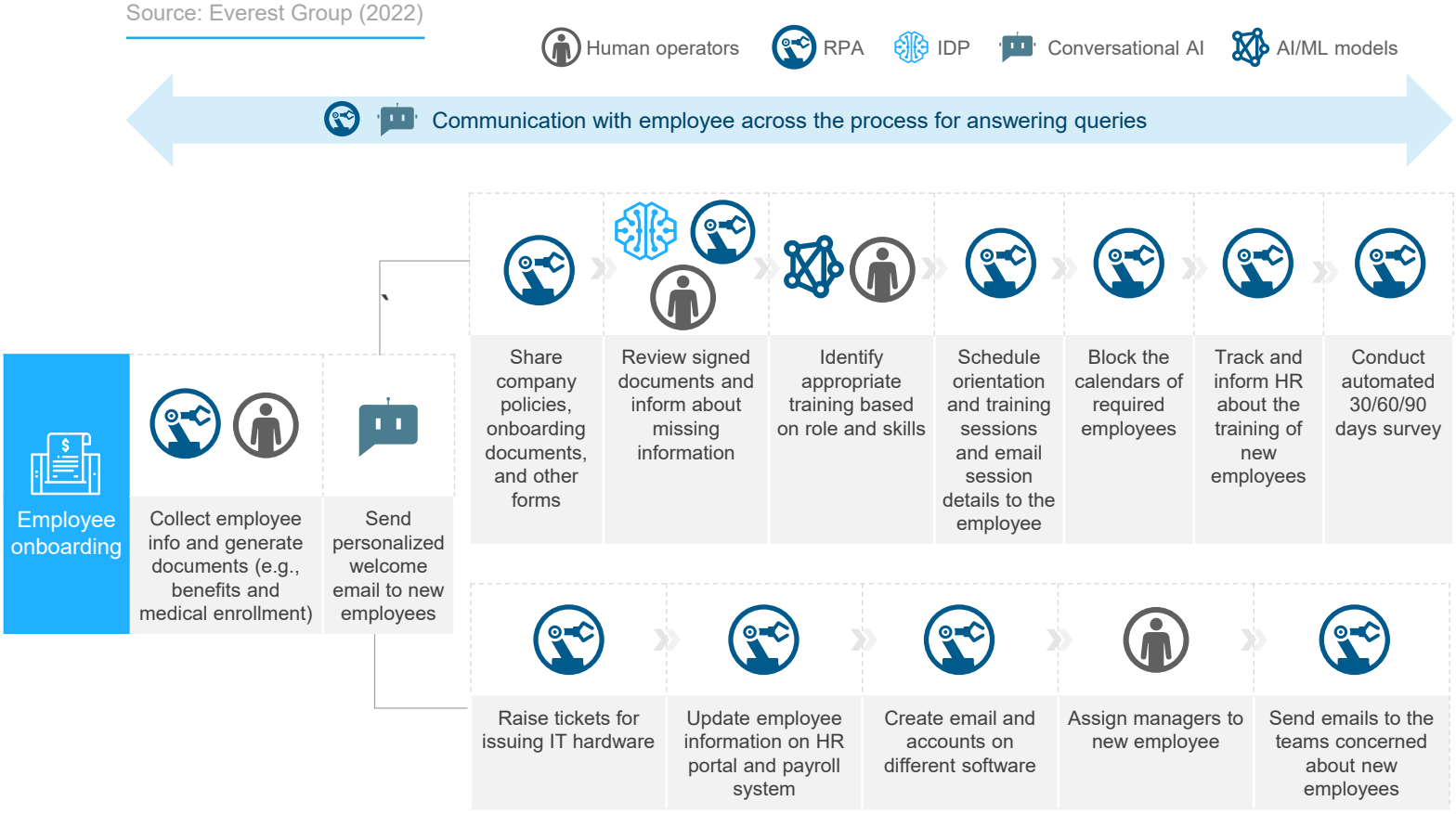
The employee onboarding process begins soon after the interview and selection process is complete. The process involves several transactional tasks, such as collecting employee information, sharing documents, scheduling orientation sessions and onboarding, blocking calendars, and conducting surveys. Organizations can leverage various IA technology elements, including RPA, to automate the process end to end. RPA can also assist in back-office tasks, such as raising tickets for issuing IT hardware, updating employee information on the HR portal and payroll system, creating email and other relevant accounts, and sending new hire introduction emails to different teams.

Additionally, conversational AI can communicate with new hires to answer their questions and share personalized updates. IDP can help review documents after the employees sign them. AI/ML models can help identify appropriate training based on new employees' roles and existing skills. Exhibit 8 represents a potentially transformed state of the employee onboarding process.

EXHIBIT 8

Future state of employee onboarding using IA elements

Source: Everest Group (2022)



Customer Relationship Management (CRM) transformation

CRM is an essential enterprise function that helps organizations create and maintain relationships with customers. Customers today expect a more personalized experience from enterprises and low turnaround time for their requests. Many tech-savvy customers prefer self-service rather than conversations with contact center agents to resolve issues. Enterprises are struggling to keep up with evolving customer behaviors and facing several challenges in CRM management, including:

- Manual processing and consequently delays and significant errors, leading to a poor customer experience
- Limited personalization across customer support, sales, and marketing
- Siloed customer data
- Poor agent productivity due to multiple disconnected applications
- Low-quality leads in sales and marketing
- High customer churn
- Difficulty in maintaining consistent brand presence

With IA, enterprises can remove inefficiencies from their CRM function and enhance customer and agent experience, as described below.

Automation applications across CRM processes

Below we describe IA's role across CRM processes such as customer support, sales, and marketing.

EXHIBIT 9

Applications of IA across CRM processes

Source: Everest Group (2022)

Process	Role of automation	Technology elements	Potential business benefits
Customer support	• Customer registration and KYC • Create, manage, and upgrade accounts • Send account notifications and alerts • Resolve customers' queries and issues • Update order status by pulling data from various sources • Initiate return and exchange • Notify shipping delays to customers • Ticket routing to appropriate contact center agent • Recommend new products and services to customers • Assist contact center agents with next best action and recommendations	• RPA • Conversational AI	• Provide 24x7 customer support • Cross-sell and up-sell • Enhance customer experience • Enhance productivity and experience of contact center agents
Sales	• Collect leads through email threads or social media • Lead qualification and follow-up • Track and deal with dead-stock • Transcript sales calls and suggest actions for better client engagement • Update CRM system withs with sales activity and customer information • Predict churn rate of customers by analyze buying patterns, interaction preferences, and web data • Prepare and share product activation license certificates with new customers • Assist customers in post-sales queries and requests	• RPA • Conversational AI • NLP • Advanced analytics	• Automated lead management • Quick turnaround time for customers • Churn prevention • Automated product activation • Enhance post sales customer experience
Marketing	• Collate customer data from multiple sources • Analyze online conversations across social media, blogs, news, and online comments to identify consumer and product trends using NLP and ML • Customer segmentation in real-time based on consumer behavior • Personalized marketing using ML including customized deals and messaging • Collect pricing information from competitors' websites and track movements • Automate SEO reporting	• RPA • Conversational AI • NLP • Advanced analytics	• Competitive analysis • Personalized messaging to customers • Automated social media monitoring • Enhanced employee experience • Enhanced marketing operations

We describe below how broader IA adoption can transform the customer support process.

Use case in CRM: customer support

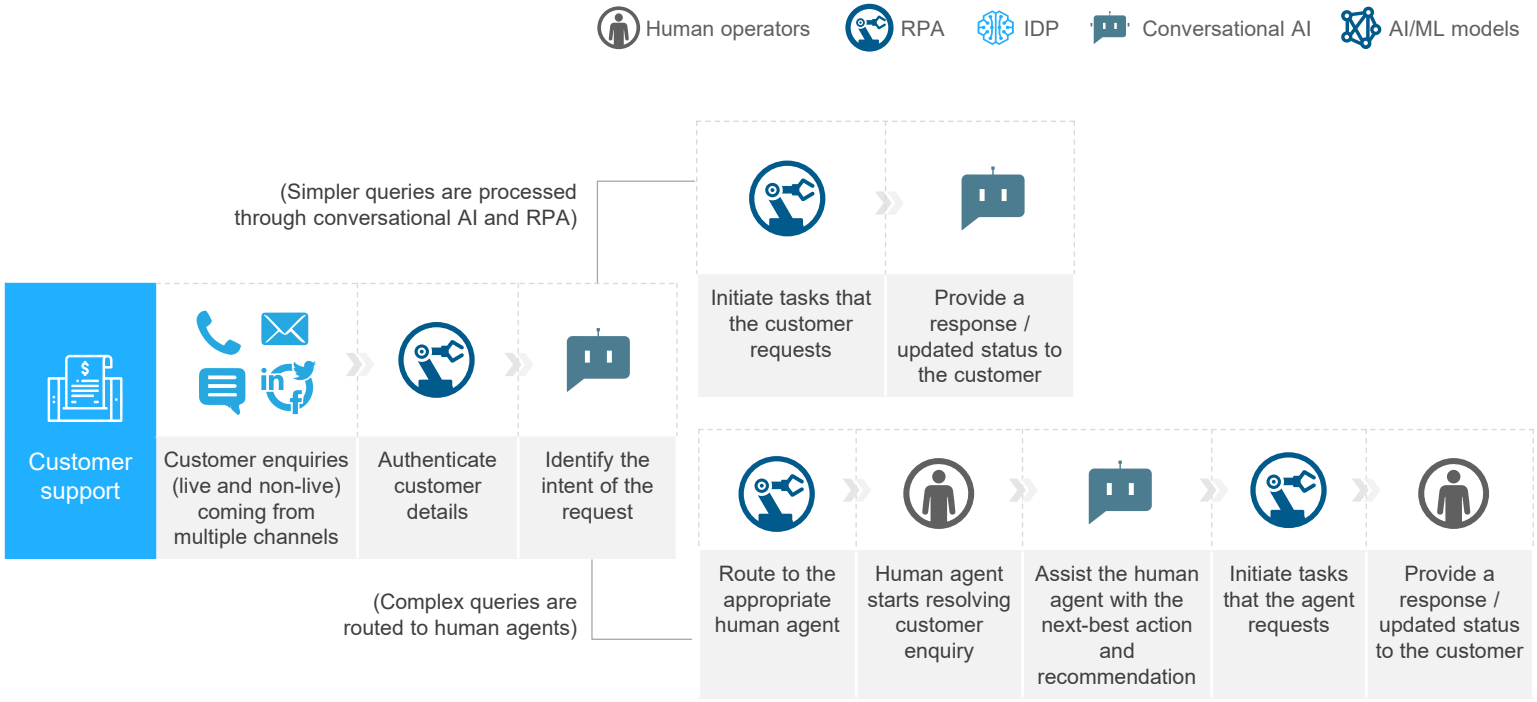
Enterprises need to respond to a number of customer enquiries and requests from multiple traditional and next-generation channels, such as email, social media, chat, and call. A combination of RPA and conversational AI can assist in these enquiries, streamline the customer support process, significantly reduce manual intervention, and recommend next-best actions to agents.

RPA can authenticate customer details, route complex queries to the appropriate agent, and initiate tasks that customers/agents request. Conversational AI can help identify the request's intent, provide responses to customers, and give recommendations to agents. The exhibit below describes the transformed state of a customer support process.

EXHIBIT 10

Future state of customer support using IA elements

Source: Everest Group (2022)



How enterprises can scale automation across functions

Enterprises face several challenges – including the lack of leadership buy-in, unrealistic expectations, the lack of a structured governance and operating model, and the inability to create and sustain a strong automation pipeline – when attempting to scale their IA programs across functions. Our research indicates that mature enterprises that have successfully scaled IA across their organizations follow certain best practices, as discussed in the following sub-sections.

Obtaining leadership buy-in and cultural support

Organizations need to obtain leadership buy-in before adopting an enterprise-wide automation strategy to keep IA initiatives on track. Executive buy-in helps ensure continuous funding of automation initiatives and plays a pivotal role in initial phases that require re-engineering of processes; setting up of the automation CoE; establishment of the right governance model; identification of the initial use cases, appropriate technologies, and partners; hiring; and change management. In addition to obtaining buy-in from the top leadership, mature enterprises also involve individual business function heads, who are typically responsible for managing change related to IA programs.

Mature enterprises develop business cases for every use case to obtain stakeholder buy-in. Setting the right expectations and communicating the objectives, outcomes, and success stories to different stakeholder groups can help expedite approvals from the leadership and other stakeholders.

Effective change management can also help enterprises develop an automation-positive culture. Enterprises that have achieved significant success with IA usually develop a culture of constantly communicating with the leadership and respective business units / departments. As automation involves a shift in the roles of individuals, it is vital for companies to adopt a change management approach that proactively communicates with the (affected) individuals and provides updates on the organization's automation strategy. Providing transparency around the automation program and addressing employee apprehensions reduce the fear of job loss. Moreover, creating a plan to reskill, upskill, or redeploy impacted employees and communicating such a plan effectively can help gain employee confidence.

Establishing a robust governance and operating model

A dedicated automation CoE and a well-defined operating model are necessary for the smooth implementation of automation initiatives and effective change management. According to Everest Group's enterprise survey, all mature enterprises have dedicated automation CoEs. Mature enterprises generally tend to set up automation CoEs at the beginning of their journeys which enables them to scale IA through organization-wide process standardization, share best practices, drive technology adoption, and create a robust governing model.

Three types of CoE models are prevalent:

- Siloed – individual business units exploring IA on their own in a decentralized manner
- Centralized – a central CoE team driving automation initiatives across all business units
- Hub-and-spoke – a hybrid model, in which a central CoE works closely with automation teams embedded in each business unit

Most enterprises start their automation initiatives in silos or with specific business functions. In the early stages of their automation journeys, such an approach enables them to gain a better understanding of the capabilities and benefits of automation and achieve quick results. As automation initiatives evolve, enterprises recognize the need to integrate these siloed efforts to realize more benefits, driving the adoption of the centralized model. This model enables benefits such as process standardization, improved governance, higher reusability of automation assets and components, and implementation of best practices, with focus on an enterprise-wide automation strategy.

However, the centralized model is marred by limitations such as slow growth and limited flexibility, understanding of the nuances of how different business units function, and business unit ownership.

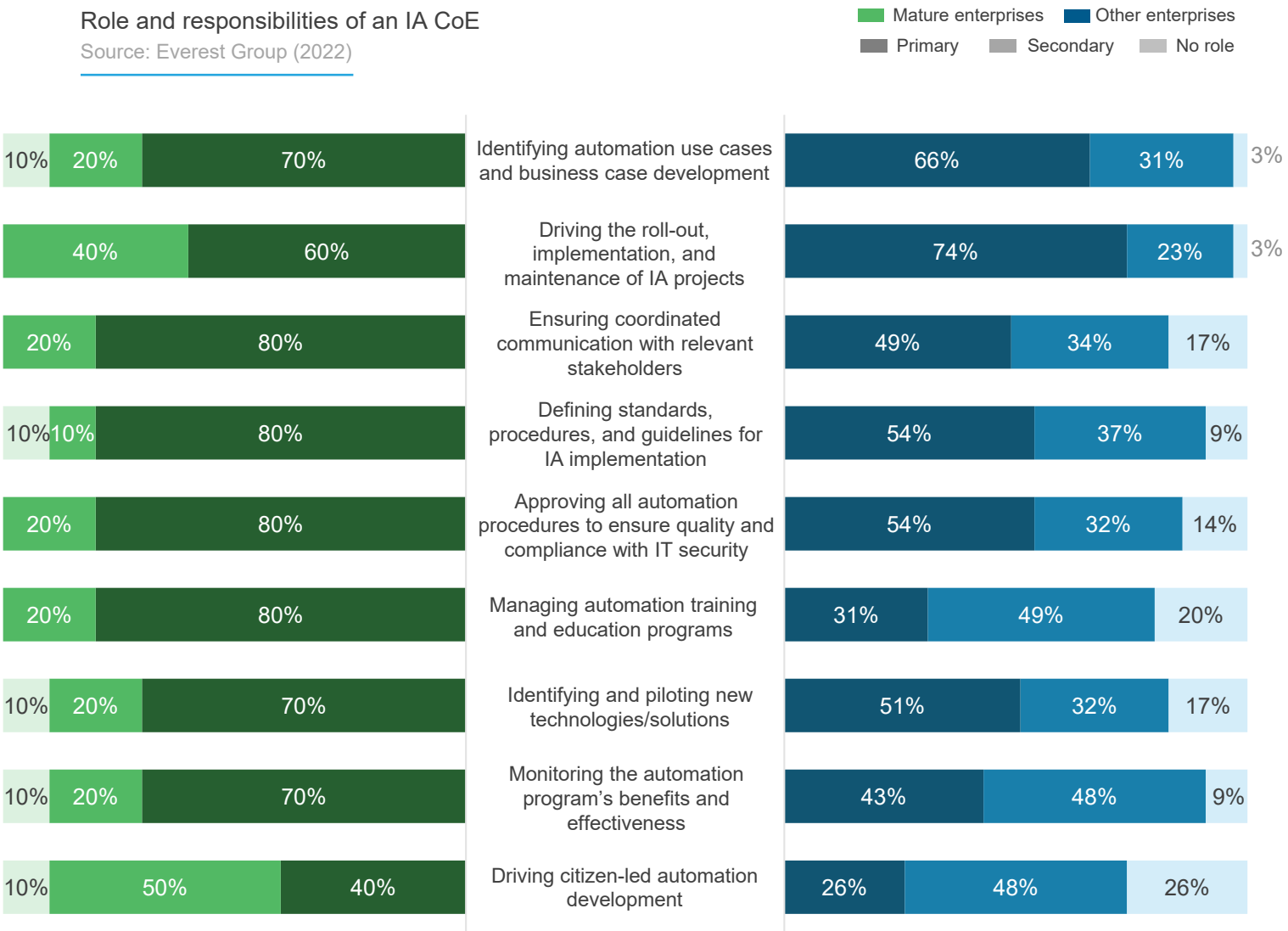
While enterprises generally start with siloed or centralized models, they gradually move to a hub-and-spoke model as it helps them scale automation initiatives quickly. In this model, the CoE (the hub) handles support activities such as resource training, provision of technology infrastructure, and governance. Individual business units or functions (the spokes) are responsible for identifying and assessing opportunities and developing and maintaining bots. The model combines the best of decentralized bot development and centralized governance.

Mature enterprises define the roles for the automation CoE and other stakeholder groups to ensure wider ownership and collaboration across business teams. Responsibilities are often divided into primary and secondary between the CoE and individual business units. The exhibit below illustrates the automation CoE's primary and secondary roles and responsibilities in mature and other enterprises. Almost 80% of mature enterprises believe that ensuring coordinated communication with relevant stakeholders, approving automation procedures to ensure quality and IT compliance, managing automation training programs, and defining standards, procedures, and guidelines are the primary responsibilities of automation CoEs.

EXHIBIT 11

Role and responsibilities of an IA CoE

Source: Everest Group (2022)



Building the automation pipeline

Mature enterprises maintain a healthy pipeline of processes to automate when scaling up. To create this pipeline of processes, enterprises can follow a top-down, bottom-up, or hybrid approach. In a top-down approach, the CoE drives use case identification. This approach results in a higher use case-conversion rate from discovery to implementation. However, it requires relatively higher change management efforts during the execution phase. It also requires more time from identification to development and experiences relatively slower implementation due to its centralized nature. In a bottom-up approach, enterprises crowd-source automation ideas from across the organization, which allows them to involve process owners more actively in building the pipeline and improve change management.

Mature enterprises generally follow a hybrid approach for use case identification, as part of which they leverage a CoE for use case identification as well as have a dedicated online portal on which business owners can submit their automation ideas. The automation CoE selects and prioritizes these ideas based on their cost, operational, and business impact. To drive citizen-led discovery, mature enterprises offer rewards and/or establish a recognition system to encourage business users to come up with automation ideas. They also share automation success stories across the enterprise to create awareness about automation initiatives and their positive impact on employees, such as lower manual and repetitive work and freeing up of bandwidth for more higher-value work.

Mature enterprises also leverage technology elements such as process mining and task mining to create a robust automation pipeline. Process mining tools capture and analyze event logs and/or desktop recordings of user activities to recreate process maps. Task mining captures process-related information through UI logs (user actions and metadata) to provide insights into the tasks and activities involved in executing a process. These solutions also provide information such as time, cost, volume, and frequency, of each activity. As certain processes require re-engineering before automation, these solutions help enterprises estimate the effort required for automating a process. They also help enterprises identify potential use cases early in the automation journey and achieve faster outcomes.

> “Creating the automation pipeline is easier and more effective now that we are leveraging process mining tools.
>
> – Abhay Kumar, Senior Manager – Digital solutions, AB InBev GCC

In addition to identifying potential use cases for automation, process mining can also help identify and eliminate process inefficiencies. Traditionally, enterprises have adopted process mining and task mining in silos for process discovery, with some focus on optimizing/automating processes.

Mature enterprises have started to leverage process mining along with task mining for holistic discovery of as-is processes, with focus on process optimization/automation.

Managing the automation lifecycle

As enterprises scale from a single robot or process to several bots that support multiple disconnected processes, it is important for them to manage the automation life cycle to ensure compliance and proper resource utilization. As enterprises scale automation, they need to monitor RPA robots regularly and may require occasional support due to process changes or breakdown of the robots. They also need to plan in advance for ongoing monitoring and maintenance efforts. Notably, while enterprises in the early phases of their automation journeys track metrics to assess the scale of automation, mature enterprises track metrics that help them improve operational decision-making to scale automation initiatives effectively. Mature enterprises have a dedicated team to track a set of integrated metrics, such as the number of use cases automated, Full Time Equivalent (FTE) capacity created per robot, license utilization, speed of implementation, and Straight Through Processing (STP) rate to measure efficiency and identify gaps in the program.

Moreover, as enterprises scale cognitive automation, they require dedicated skilled talent to review ML model performance over time to determine any degradation of the models. Mature enterprises track metrics such as F-1, recall, precision, and accuracy to ensure optimal performance of the ML models.

> We started our automation journey with the vision of scaling quickly to multiple business functions, so we built our infrastructure accordingly from the beginning. Having a clear strategy to scale automation with industry best practices helped us achieve the desired outcomes.
>
> –Senior Product Owner, Multi-national food products enterprise

Case study

Client details

AB InBev is a leading multinational brewing company headquartered in Leuven, Belgium, involved in brewing, marketing, and distributing alcoholic beverages to customers globally. It has over 169,000 employees worldwide and reported a revenue of US$54.3 billion in 2021. It has a diverse portfolio of 500 beer brands and operates in nearly 50 countries worldwide.

IA journey

- AB InBev began its IA journey about six years ago, with an initial focus on RPA that later evolved to IA, with investments in technologies such as IDP, conversational AI/chatbots, task mining, and process mining. Initially, AB InBev ran the automation program through a third-party service provider partner before deciding to set up a Center of Excellence (CoE) in-house
- Over the years, it scaled its automation program to over 290 RPA bots across functions such as finance, HR, marketing, and sales. AB InBev aims to deploy another 40-50 automation use cases 2022. The company is focusing on end-end digitalization and planning to further expand the program to other business functions, such as global supply chain and logistics. It also plans to enable more citizen developers through its Citizen Developer Model (CDM), which will allow it to scale up the automation program exponentially

Challenges

Below are some of the challenges that AB InBev faced when adopting and scaling IA

- Change management, including concerns around how the technology would impact employees and adoption-related concerns
- Spreading automation awareness among employees for them to suggest potential use cases
- Discovering new use cases was challenging initially due to the lack of effective collaboration between the operations and technology teams
- A diverse technology landscape, due to the company's many strategic acquisitions over the years, which made it difficult to implement solutions across the organization

Solution and outcomes

To solve these challenges, AB InBev implemented a change management strategy, increased communication with employees to make them comfortable with the technologies, and enabled citizen developers to automate smaller use cases to allow the CoE to work on larger, end-to-end automation use cases.

EXHIBIT 12

Outcomes that AB InBev achieved through IA initiatives

Source: Everest Group (2022)

Break-even	Operational impact	Business impact
Achieved break-even in less than a year for almost every RPA deployment.	Implemented end-to-end automation that enabled significant savings in manual hours and reduced Turn-around Time (TAT) for processes; chatbot deployments for grievance addressal helped improve the employee experience	Higher speed of processing for customer-facing processes significantly increased sales

Winning insights

The AB InBev team believes that the following factors helped the company achieve success with its IA program:

- Creating the right automation program structure and framework to enable scale was an important success factor. The company scaled up using the same framework across different zones and geographies, which enabled a single path of digitalization
- A strong focus on design and security enabled the team to securely deploy and scale up. Alignment with the IT team was also helpful in ensuring that the solution was suitable for the IT landscape and fully secure
- Choosing the right product while optimizing the Operational Expenditure (OpEx) is vital to scale up in the future. Some IA products in the market can kick-off the automation journey but do not allow teams to scale up easily
- Enabling citizen developers to automate transactional tasks helped the CoE team focus on more complex solutions. This helped the organization scale up the automation program exponentially across the organization
- Support from the top management was vital, and it helped the organization venture into newer technologies, such as task mining, process mining, and chatbots. Business benefits drove the prioritization of initiatives, keeping in mind the Return on Investment (RoI)

> Our approach is to always start by understanding the business need when figuring out automation opportunities. It is not just about efficiencies anymore but about aligning with the business and its priorities.
>
> – Vinod Elangoven, Director – Digital solutions, AB InBev GCC

Conclusion

IA, when scaled across the organization, has the potential to transform businesses and help them become future-ready. In addition to yielding large-scale cost and operational benefits, automation at scale helps enterprises enhance customer and employee experience. Enterprises that have achieved significant success with IA tend to scale automation across the organization and target both simple transactional tasks and complex judgment-intensive tasks through IA technologies such as RPA, IDP, conversational AI, ML models, analytics, and process mining. As enterprises look to scale up their automation programs, they should focus on obtaining leadership buy-in, ensuring smooth change management, establishing a robust governance and operating model, building the automation pipeline, and managing the automation life cycle.

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