

ESTABLISHING A CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR ROBOTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION

Four key considerations for streamlining workflow efficiency and increasing value creation.

Today's Robotic Process Automation (RPA) tools are rapidly changing the market's perspective on automation. Through agile design, these tools enable enterprises to streamline workflow efficiency, freeing employee capacity for innovation and value creation.

The RPA market is projected to grow from \$10 to \$43.5 billion from 2022 to 2029. As RPA becomes more valuable, organizations are focusing on establishing transparent governance structures to better facilitate automation efforts. The importance of these structures is clear with 73% of RPA-deploying firms utilizing either a Center of Excellence (COE) or similar framework to plan, manage, and track automation initiatives.

WHAT IS A COE?

A Center of Excellence is comprised of a small group of experts that define and monitor standards and develop programs across the enterprise. Many companies use COEs to govern higher-value functions in areas such as finance, HR, supply chain, and IT, creating a more agile decision-making environment in a particular area of expertise.

WHY IS A COE IMPORTANT?

Any organization undergoing RPA deployment faces critical questions such as:

- Who will maintain the robots?
- Who will select the next process?
- Who will develop the next robot?
- Who will monitor the development quality?
- Who will safeguard security standards?

While answers to these questions remain simple during an initial pilot, they become more complex when implementing an enterprise-wide RPA program. These decisions should fall to a handful of groups:

- 1) The RPA COE 2) The Process Owner 3) The IT Department

A COE's focus on coordinating operations, instead of executing day-to-day activities, ensures appropriate stakeholders are involved in any solution. The RPA COE and its thought leaders mitigate strategic and operational risks, while ensuring automation projects are controlled and managed to meet key business objectives.

WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL COMPONENTS OF A COE?

Trexin recommends a 4-stage approach to building an effective RPA COE:

1. Put a Head on the Horse

An organization must designate an RPA COE leader and empower the individual to design the COE. This design entails agreeing on and documenting specific decisions to be made by the COE and the function

or business unit. Such a design also requires a COE leader with strong facilitation and negotiation skills. Moreover, he or she will need the authority to mandate specific approaches and decisions, because it is unlikely that the COE will be immediately popular or its role fully clear. Once boundaries have been established, the COE leader can focus on additional resources needed to run the COE.

2. Build a COE Framework

Beyond RPA-oriented decision-making authority, several roles are needed to design, implement, and administer robots. These roles may be included in the scope of the COE or simply governed by it.

Developing and running an enterprise-wide RPA program will require several key roles:

- **Controller** – a role to monitor or determine how robot migration to production is orchestrated.
- **Designer** – a role to determine guidelines and standards that will ensure the highest-impact processes are automated using robots.
- **Developer** – an expert role in the configuration of robots. Like complex Excel spreadsheets, robots can be configured using intricate scripting. This scripting is nearly impossible to explain or transition to an untrained resource.
- **Administrator** – a role to monitor existing licenses or purchase new licenses from RPA vendors. This role is often needed to calculate the enterprise-wide ROI or impact of an RPA program.
- **IT Infrastructure Lead** – a role to ensure that servers, laptops, test beds, and test data are adequately secured. This role is also responsible for approving production moves and developing internal procedures associated with production migrations.

When building the COE framework, organizations must decide several key factors including level of control, check and balances, and incentive structures. The best model for an organization is highly dependent on its culture and how a company wants to make technology-related decisions. Regardless of these decisions, the COE should not be a large organization.

3. Support Organizational Change

Employees are more likely to embrace and contribute to initiatives if they understand the connection between RPA strategy and overall corporate strategy. Since RPA programs are sometimes perceived as a threat to jobs, the term “robots” can trigger employee anxiety, underscore rumors, or even garner attention from bargaining units. A smooth transition to RPA requires thoughtful strategies to address employee concerns. Thus, involvement and awareness from the HR department is essential. Many companies take the stance they’re attempting to “take the robot out of human work,” therefore allowing employees more time for strategic and analytical activities. Other companies target the cost savings generated by large reductions in transactional workforces. Regardless of strategy, it is critical to maintain consistent, deliberate communication. Additionally, it is critical that risk mitigation plans are well documented and ready for deployment.

4. Track Results

Keeping tabs on milestones and benefits achieved by RPA solutions is an essential responsibility of the COE. Even if no ROI targets are expected, it is important to articulate the benefits RPA delivers to the organization. Comparable to most enterprise projects, RPA development will compete with other projects in the organization. Therefore, if benefits are not clear and documented, RPA efforts may be replaced by other initiatives. Tracking quantitative benefits is essential to confer the value RPA programs deliver to an enterprise. However, organizations should also examine less obvious qualitative benefits derived from RPA solutions, such as supporting business continuity, enhancing information security, and improving customer satisfaction when making the overall business case for change.

For more information about RPA, [visit our website](#) or reach out directly to any of our authors below.

Sources:

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