

HOW BOTS IMPACT THE BALANCE SHEET: WHY RPA IS THE KEY TO UNLOCKING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR FINANCE

Part One - How an integrated Robotic Process Automation approach is critical for CFOs needing to accelerate Digital Transformation across Finance

Legacy processes are delaying digital transformation for Finance

While consultancy firm Deloitte suggests that more than 50% of organisations are currently targeting digital improvements to their core Financial processes, progress frequently isn't as rapid as many CFOs might hope. Indeed, Servicetrace's recent survey conducted in association with CIMA – The Chartered Institute of Management Accounts – found that only 40% of members surveyed actually had a Finance digital transformation programme in place.

Clearly, for many there is still a disconnect between the desire to transform operations and the ability of organisations to deliver on its potential. Despite the strategic role played by the Office of the CFO, the actual Finance function can be held back by legacy systems and extensive manual processes. Consultancy firm EY acknowledged this when it polled global finance leaders and found that 71% felt that traditional back-office processes and behaviours were slowing the modernization of their Finance operations.

Finance – often the last to benefit?

The result is that Finance is often the last to benefit from key business-wide initiatives such as digital transformation and process automation. One of the key barriers to realising benefits here is the sheer end-to-end complexity of many routine accounting and financial processes. These have typically evolved over time into a blend of digital and paper-based documentation processing.

Because of this, far too much of a Finance employee's time is consumed by multiple repetitive manual tasks, with frequent re-keying of data from one stage to the next. This not only increases the likelihood of human error, introducing risk into the process, but also inevitably increases operational costs.

Increasing Finance productivity through Robotic Process Automation

So it's hardly surprising that the Office of the CFO is now showing strong interest in Robotic Process Automation (RPA). RPA solutions offer a cost-effective way for finance teams to increase their overall departmental productivity. According to research firm Gartner, RPA will eliminate around 20% of non-value-added tasks within the Finance function, with bots able to automate a broad range of routine financial operational processes without the need for human intervention.

That's why RPA is now a core technology in finance transformation plans, with more than one in three finance professionals reporting that RPA is a top priority. By deploying Robotic Process Automation, businesses can reduce errors and compliance risks by automating their often-fragmented legacy manual and Excel-based finance operations. And by streamlining these RPA-enabled processes, the Office of the CFO can quickly start to move their broader digital transformation initiatives back on track.

CFOs increasingly recognise what's at stake here – particularly as Gartner suggests that true Enterprise Process Automation gives Finance teams the potential to lower their routine administrative costs by as much as 30% by combining hyperautomation with redesigned operational processes.

So how can the Office of the CFO put RPA to work?

Robotic Process Automation works to automate repetitive tasks within the Finance function – such as extracting data from physical documents, switching between and sharing information with multiple applications, and learning as the process progresses. Deployed effectively, RPA can assume the execution of these manual processes, at scale, and help to transform the traditional Finance workplace into a more automated environment.

By taking on board the execution of manual Finance processes at scale, true Enterprise Process Automation solutions can either handle complete workloads or work to augment and accelerate the Finance team's output. Adopting a more comprehensive Robotic Process Automation approach enables the Finance team to systematically work through their core Accounting and Finance processes - initially automating the more rules-based repetitive processes before focusing on more complex tasks.

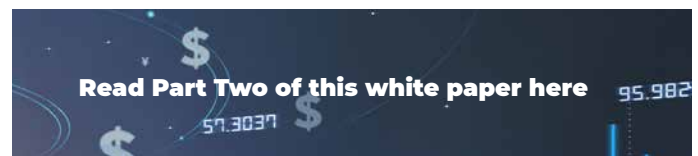
Following this path of sequential RPA deployment effectively builds the foundation for a successful digital transformation program within Finance. Key RPA goals for CFOs here would include:

- Saving time and money by increasing efficiency and productivity
- Significantly reducing error rates, freeing Finance staff to focus on higher value tasks
- Ensuring highly auditable RPA-enabled processes to support Finance's complex compliance requirements
- Scaling existing process capacity to handle regular peak activity & cycle needs

Targeting the right Finance tasks

In Part Two of this Servicetrace 'How Bots Impact the Balance Sheet' white paper, we will detail how the Office of the CFO can identify those Finance tasks that are most appropriate for RPA deployment. Here the focus will be on processes that are:

- Simple and rules-based
- Feature high transaction volumes
- Can be mapped by clear, logical rules
- Repetitive
- Often error-prone



Servicetrace – enabling Finance Process Automation

Servicetrace is a leader in the provision of Enterprise Process Automation solutions, with a track record of continued Robotic Process Automation (RPA) innovation and customer success since it first began developing software robots and automation solutions in 2004.

The company's RPA solutions are deployed across multiple industries, with many of the world's leading organisations – including major global firms such as Atos, Computacenter, Deutsche Telekom, Fujitsu, Merck and Siemens – placing Servicetrace RPA at the heart of their automation activities.

Servicetrace Finance Process Automation solutions are focused on helping organisations to unlock the maximum value from automating longer and more complex processes. The company's comprehensive Servicetrace X1 Enterprise Process Automation platform enables control of all projects, stakeholders, bots and lifecycle phases. Using a single, advanced RPA platform, Servicetrace provides the Office of the CFO with the level of decision support that's increasingly needed to automate their most difficult processes.

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