

RPA (Robotic Process Automation) in Project Management

September 2021

topic
RPA (Robotic Process Automation) in Project Management

Date : 17 Sept, 2021
Time: 19:30 IST (GMT+5:30)
Earn 1.5 PDU

Monthly Online Event
Open for PMI members & non-members

Panelists

Asia	Latin America	North America	Europe	Africa	
 Scan the QR Code	 Dhanusha Muthukumarana	 Roberto Netto	 Jimmy Godard	 Yiannis Vithynos	 Johan Steyn

Session Moderator

From the editor's desk



Yudha Pratama
PMI Puget Sound, USA

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is software technology that's easy for anyone to use to automate digital tasks.

It is a way to remove mundane tasks that are repetitive from people and relegate those tasks to "machines" or "bots". It is essentially a "task automation." If you have written an email auto responder, you have used an RPA.

When you are thinking about using RPA - you will need to make sure that you design your business capability before on-boarding the tool, not the other way around.

This is the age of technology. It is inevitable that repetitive things will be managed by the machines or bots very soon.

Project managers, to be relevant, must understand the technology and learn it. It is true that a project manager cannot be a subject matter expert in everything that he/she is doing, however it is important that he/she has an understanding of the technology without being an expert.



Dhanusha Muthukumarana

Asia



Question:

What are the potential stumbling blocks in implementing RPA?

Answer:

It is important to have a focused approach to get an RPA implementation right in the first attempt in any organization, as it is about bringing in change to knowledge workers and it requires multiple stakeholder support.

With RPA, the focus is to remove the repetitive and mundane tasks from human workers to software bots. Even though the name says, "Robotic Process Automation", what RPA actually does is "Task Automation". As we know, a process is made of a series of tasks which happens in a sequence or in a particular order, involving data and decisions. In an RPA project, some of the tasks (repetitive and mundane tasks) are taken away from humans and moved to software bots for execution where other tasks will remain with humans. Therefore, it is important to have the support of all who are affected by this change, rather than just letting go of the tasks they have been executing, it will be useful for them to understand the "What" and "Why" this is being done. Hence stakeholder expectation setting, and value conversations are quite helpful and useful in RPA projects. As a result, software bots and humans will work hand in hand in executing tasks and performing a process. This is also called human bot collaboration. Hence integrated stakeholder management is key for success of an RPA project.

Question:

How can project managers can leverage RPA?

Answer:

Project Managers can leverage RPA in two major ways.

1. Use RPA to help Manage Projects. This is to use RPA in the Project Management Process. It could be to gather data from multiple systems for reporting or to identify an exception in the project. There are many repetitive, mundane, and logic-based tasks PMs execute in the Project Management cycle. This is about understand and use RPA to help them better manage projects and reduce time spent for operational work.
2. Use RPA in project delivery. This is about PMs having the understanding to influence project delivery teams to consider using RPA and automation techniques or tools as part of the delivery process. In technology projects for example, activities such as Master Data uploads, Data migration tasks, UAT and testing would be mentioned as few areas automation could be used, without having humans to perform the same. The execution will be faster and almost error free, helping projects delivered faster.





Roberto Netto

Latin America

Question:

What are the potential stumbling blocks in implementing RPA?

Answer:

In my opinion, is the spatiality of data. Today we have a lot of systems that we input because we are in the digital transformation. But all the systems as not a concept as a whole, but only looking from a macro view. Later this data will be necessary to create a good report, and it will take a lot of time to create.

The benefit of RPA is to get this data and concentrate on a unique database, so we gain time and mitigate errors from transporting information, from one database to other.



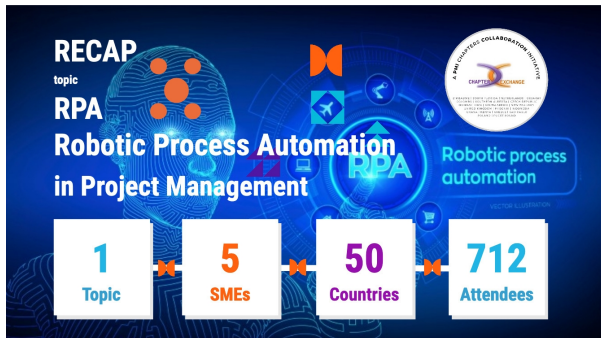
We can add to this problem, the quality of data, because, sometimes we use different words and expressions to give the same feedback. We did not have a common language, an ontology. Another is the fear of lost jobs. We are in the comfort zone, done mechanical tasks, but we want to move on, return to a classroom and do the Long Life Learning.

Question:

How can project managers leverage RPA?

Answer:

The principal aspect for me is to become more human. Let the machine, check if the task is in the time and cost, for us to be able to give compassion and empathy to the next one of us. It will create a good place to work, it will bring more performance for the team, and this leads to have a solid company with great results, even in a pandemic.





Jimmy Godard

North America



Question:

What are the potential stumbling blocks in implementing RPA?

Answer:

Robotic process automation in its simplest form is another fancy way to refer to automation. Robotic process automation (RPA) occurs when business managers leverage software or hardware systems to automate basic tasks that function across various applications, just as human workers do. There is the component of implementing RPA solutions in organizations and the project management activities of implementing RPA solutions. They are different.

Project managers can successfully implement wrong RPA solutions, whereas they can fail to implement the right solutions. The forecast for the RPA market value for the year 2023 is estimated to be more than \$10 billion, according to Statista. Business managers must evaluate the actual value of implementing RPA, whether the existing processes require sophisticated automation, no human intervention, whether the workforce spends less time strategizing, and more time doing clerical tasks.

The more prevalent stumbling blocks in implementing emerging technologies, and RPA is not of any exception are: 1) lack of clarity on business processes, identify processes that are optimal for RPA [I once automated the process to create email signatures in MS Outlook for business users – no real return on that investment, do not do it], evaluate the selection of attended and unattended automation, build a team that includes end-users that currently do the clerical tasks, conduct feasibility assessment, and proof of concept

Question:

How can project managers can leverage RPA?

Answer:

There are several scenarios where project managers can leverage RPA positively. First, the advent of industry 4.0 has unleashed several new technologies for organizations to evaluate and implement. Project managers will eventually manage projects such as Big Data/Analytics, Cloud Computing, Machine to Machine, Cognitive Computing, and other technologies that aim at automating more business and IT processes at scale such as RPA.

What about leveraging RPA to manage projects. RPA can easily streamline the various project management processes easily. I have accomplished this already. Processes such as business cases, project initiation, planning, execution templates, reports for monitoring and control, and project closure can follow some automated processes. In contrast, project managers shift their focus to leading projects versus managing projects.

Few effective project managers enjoy the mundane tasks of project forms, business requirement documents, lessons learned, budgets, timelines, resource management. They would prefer to spend more time on stakeholder engagement, leadership, and motivation, lead (not manage) project teams more effectively, and maintain momentum to project completion. RPA cannot substitute for these skills.





Yiannis Vithynos

Europe



Question:

What are the potential stumbling blocks in implementing RPA?

Answer:

1. Lack of quality data
2. Lack of well-structured PM processes
3. Inefficient value stream mapping for RPA application
4. Misunderstanding of RPA



Question:

How can project managers can leverage RPA?

Answer:

1. Automate repetitive tasks that do not require supervision
2. Automate data distribution
3. Minimize delays in specific parts of the PM process
4. Free resources for higher level work



Johan Steyn

Africa



Question:

What are the potential stumbling blocks in implementing RPA?

Answer:

The most common stumbling block is that the business case for automation is not defined. Another is that the target operating model is not clear. And also - the change management around RPA is often not done right - people fear this tech as they think they may lose their jobs.

Question:


How can project managers can leverage RPA?


Answer:

RPA can automate a wide range of structured and repeatable project management processes, resulting in high productivity and efficiency. RPA helps project managers plan, organize, and monitor their activities.


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