
Intelligent RPA streamlines key manufacturing workflows

Amplify the benefits of automation
by incorporating artificial intelligence

Robotic process automation

Manufacturers are poised to adopt robotic process automation (RPA) to automate aspects of their enterprise. Using software-based robots to automate digital business workflows, manufacturers can relieve workers of time-consuming manual tasks. And they can achieve results fast: RPA projects can often be implemented quickly and cost-effectively, delivering a rapid return on investment (ROD).

Augmenting RPA solutions with artificial intelligence (AI) enhances the benefits that RPA can deliver. Intelligent RPA allows you to expand the scope of automation to new processes and reduce the need for human intervention. You can accelerate processes, further increase efficiency and scale cost-effectively—all while freeing up your human resources for higher-level projects.

Before your manufacturing business implements an intelligent RPA solution, you need a clear understanding of why intelligence is so critical for maximizing the benefits of automation. By selecting the right use cases for your company, you can start fast and begin experiencing those benefits right away.

Discovering the value of intelligent RPA

Instead of using physical robots, RPA employs software-based virtual robots to complete tasks that previously required time-consuming manual work. RPA can be used for anything from migrating data and filling out forms to generating reports and providing customer service.

RPA solutions are not designed to take jobs away from humans. They are meant to free humans from tedious tasks so those people can focus more time and energy on projects that require human intelligence. For example, instead of spending hours processing partner invoices, your team members can explore creative approaches to strengthening partner relationships. And in addition to being able to scale your processes—and your businesses—cost-effectively, RPA solutions can substantially increase the speed of workflows and improve accuracy.

Standard RPA solutions, however, do have some limitations. In many cases, data must be structured and presented in particular formats for the virtual robot to interpret and act on that data correctly. Moreover, RPA solutions typically require human intervention whenever decisions must be made.

Incorporating intelligence into RPA helps overcome these limitations. An intelligent RPA solution could extract unstructured data from a scanned document using optical character recognition (OCR), determine what type of information the document provides and then use the appropriate data to kick off a process, such as generating an invoice or seeking approval for a payment. Intelligent RPA enables you to create and manage automated processes for your organization.

Automating the back office and beyond

Intelligent RPA solutions open up new possibilities for automating a wide variety of workflows across the enterprise. For many manufacturers, finance and accounting functions are often the best place to start their intelligent RPA journey.

Consider the amount of finance and accounting work that involves data entry and data movement. Team members often need to log into one system, open a file, find and copy a specific type of data, log into another system and move the copied data to a file in that second system. RPA can significantly accelerate this type of process. A virtual robot can carry out those tasks in a fraction of the time a human can, and the robot can repeat those tasks continuously, day and night.

Infusing intelligence into RPA enables you to automate finance and accounting processes that previously required human intervention. For example, an intelligent solution could forecast future growth by analyzing historical performance and factoring in a variety of trends and market variables.

Back office and beyond

How can you use intelligent RPA for your manufacturing enterprise? In addition to automating common finance and accounting workflows, manufacturers are implementing intelligent RPA solutions to streamline everything from assembling bills of materials to providing customer service. The right solutions will be able to interact with a full range of IT systems and applications.

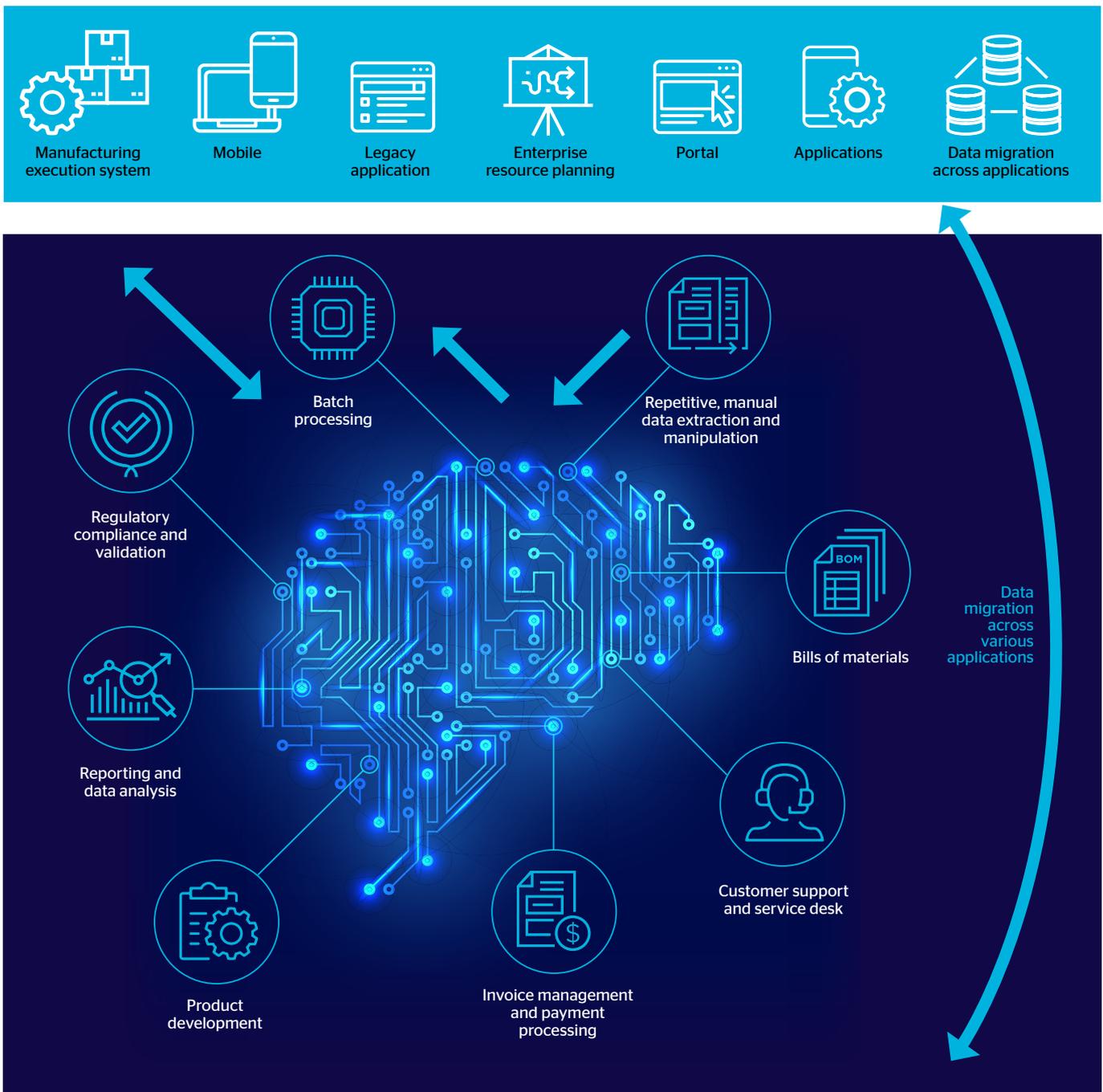


Figure 1: Intelligent RPA can be applied to a wide range of manufacturing enterprise workflows.

Key use cases

Identifying key use cases to gain quick wins

Finding the right use cases for intelligent RPA can help you get started quickly and recognize benefits right away. While you might be eager to automate invoicing or streamline compliance, you could also discover ways to accelerate product development or improve customer support.

Automate invoice processing

Receiving an invoice might require a team member to evaluate each line on the invoice, reconcile the amount with the existing purchase order and route the invoice for approval. A virtual robot can easily handle those tasks, even if the invoice is a printed document that requires data extraction. In addition, the robot can determine when something isn't adding up correctly and then inform the organization submitting the invoice as well as the appropriate internal teams.

Similarly, a virtual robot could help streamline a variety of other finance and accounting processes. You could use robots to apply customer payments and process refunds, reconcile forecasted and actual expenditures, pull credit bureau reports, conduct audit reporting, update customer addresses and more.

Assemble bills of materials

What if you could simplify the process of compiling manufacturing bills of materials (BOMs)? Your teams rely on BOMs for product planning and assembly—if the BOM has errors, products might be assembled slowly or incorrectly. Intelligent RPA solutions can automate the creation of BOMs by rapidly retrieving information from multiple applications and systems. They can also conduct checks on part availability and component compatibility that might be extremely time-consuming for human evaluation.

Streamline compliance

To comply with industry or government regulations, you might be required to archive a variety of documents, including evidence that you are producing safe products, protecting data, adhering to export rules and more. Intelligent RPA can streamline the process of collecting documents, archiving them correctly—for the mandated length of time—and producing the right material for auditors.

Deploy customer-service chatbots

Your customers expect responsive customer service, but providing that service can be expensive, especially if you have customers located in multiple geographic regions. Creating an intelligent chatbot can help you deliver the level of service your customers demand while controlling costs. With an AI front end, your chatbot can determine the customer issue and trigger an automated process, which might involve initiating a return, alerting a production team about a defect or connecting the customer to a higher-level human support agent. By bringing together AI and RPA in your chatbot, you can respond faster to more customers, whenever and from wherever they need assistance.

Improve product development

Your product development process might involve a fair amount of trial and error. Keeping track of what worked and what didn't work requires manual effort. What if you could automate the process of recording data throughout the development cycle? You could let your team concentrate more on exploring new product ideas. Intelligent RPA solutions not only record data automatically, they can also analyze that data, enabling your team to better identify trends and predict future outcomes.

Starting small and benefiting quickly

Compared with other types of digital transformation technologies, RPA can be implemented quickly and will start delivering results fast. Manufacturers often start with simple RPA use cases that do not require intelligence. In many situations, a new virtual robot can be up and running—and yielding results—in a few months.

Once companies realize the value of this type of automation, many then begin to investigate intelligent RPA. With a solid RPA foundation in place, augmenting your environment with AI lets you deepen the benefits you experience and expand to new use cases.

Work with Atos to speed every phase of your intelligent RPA journey, from identifying the right use cases and creating robot prototypes to moving new robots into production.

Working with an experienced partner

When it's time for your manufacturing business to advance on its automation journey, be sure you work with an experienced partner. The right partner can help you identify the best RPA use cases for your business, set ROI goals, create a virtual robot prototype, conduct a proof of concept and move your robot into production.

Atos has the experience and expertise to help you capitalize on the benefits of intelligent RPA. Here are just two examples of how Atos has helped organizations achieve tangible results with intelligent RPA:

Streamlining parts verification: A major automotive manufacturer worked with Atos to simplify the process for starting up its vehicle assembly line. Before production begins, the company must verify that appropriate parts have been correctly entered into SAP. In the past, the verification process required a meeting with 10 to 15 people. By working with Atos, the company implemented a robot that automates verification and eliminates the need for the meeting. If data issues exist, the robot triggers a service request ticket assigned to the appropriate group. The robot also sends a summary report with the verification status to the right business team. With this RPA solution, the company can efficiently start up production and ensure part orders are in place while freeing up team members for other tasks.

Accelerating vehicle repossessions:

Atos implemented an RPA solution to help the collections department for a loan organization accelerate the time-consuming process of locating vehicles for repossession. One robot reads the list of vehicles ready for repossession and then submits the location requests. A second robot retrieves the vehicle's current location and sends the real-time GPS coordinates and street address to a repossession vendor. As a result, the number of vehicles processed increased from 200 to more than 1,600 per day. The robot performs the tasks of more than six full-time associates and saved the organization \$6 million per year by repossessing cars promptly.

Atos offers comprehensive RPA solutions, from initial planning, design and testing to implementation, training and ongoing support. You can run your virtual robots at your facilities or in our hosted environments. Work with us to automate more of your business so you can enhance efficiency, reduce costs and accelerate processes while enabling more of your employees to focus on innovation.

About Atos

Atos is a global leader in digital transformation with 120,000 employees in 73 countries and annual revenue of €13 billion.

European number one in Cloud, Cybersecurity and High-Performance Computing, the Group provides end-to-end Orchestrated Hybrid Cloud, Big Data, Business Applications and Digital Workplace solutions through its Digital Transformation Factory, as well as transactional services through Worldline, the European leader in the payment industry. With its cutting-edge technologies and industry knowledge, Atos supports the digital transformation of its clients across all business sectors. The Group is the Worldwide Information Technology Partner for the Olympic & Paralympic Games and operates under the brands Atos, Atos Syntel, Unify and Worldline. Atos is listed on the CAC40 Paris stock index.

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