

## **Seven Pitfalls of Process Automation**

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In recent years, many businesses have lived by the notion 'automate or die' when it comes to their processes. With the growing ease of [business process automation software](#), many companies and consultants feel their job is not done until every inch of the office is covered with automation.

BPA software has undoubtedly helped companies cut down costs and improve efficiency. By minimizing human error and allowing systems to speak to each other, business process automation has given some significant improvements to the way business is done.

However, a blanket approach to automation can leave a trail of wreckage and a bitter taste for business owners. Automation is not a one-size-fits-all solution to fix business problems, and when applied to every situation, it can create more problems than it solves.

Shockingly, some processes can even run better when freed from restrictive business process automation software. Productivity can suffer when processes are subjected to improper automation, thereby negating any perceived benefit. And with the cost of most automation tools, these struggles are more than just an annoyance.

Here are seven pitfalls to watch out for when you are implementing automation.

## 1. Don't Overspend



Process automation is designed to cut costs and time. So when the software you choose ends up costing more than it's worth, only to result in employees trying to hack their way around the process, you know you have a big problem. This is when automation becomes a liability instead of an asset.

When companies spend big for a large automation initiative, they want to get their money's worth and apply automation to as many processes as possible. However, when applied incorrectly, automation is going to hurt a company much more than it helps it.

## 2. Watch out for Insufficient Gains

A company's reasonable expectation out of any business process automation initiative is to deliver results that surpass the previous manual processes. But many companies don't gather the data to substantiate this claim. An automated process can give the feeling of speed only because it is digital, but if you are not getting the right results, or if you spend most of your time trying to fix the process, you've

wasted your time and money.

Automation can take some time to show significant improvement as people get used to a new system. However, if you can't demonstrate a clear time and efficiency advantage after a few months, you need to either make changes to your automated process, or consider going back to manual. The gains from any automation initiative should not only show in terms of improving efficiency, but also justify the cost it takes to implement the solution in the first place.

### 3. Don't Let Dehumanization Kill Intelligence



In the customer service sector, [automated voice service has become so ineffective](#) that many customers will give up at the thought of going in circles and not finding a solution. One key is that most automated voice services don't have any intelligence built in. They are merely a catalogue of resources searchable by voice. The system can't deal with nuances or make quick adjustments. In many situations of dealing with customers, manual processes involving human interactions give a better experience.

The key lesson here is not to miss out on the opportunity to optimize workflow by draining out intelligence from a process. Automation trumps human errors, but some

processes must have a bit of human inefficiency built into them to ensure that the final experience is positive. Processes can lack accountability when human intervention is out of the equation. Customers/partners might feel ignored if they are left at the mercy of going through an automated process.

#### 4. Automation can be Inflexible

Depending on the type of software you use, automation solutions can create a rigid structure where, if one thing goes wrong, the result might be a series of errors that might take time to discover and fix. Similarly, some small changes might also be difficult to implement.

All these can be a source of employee dissatisfaction and discouragement if not addressed. Automation is great for an organization's overall efficiency; however, it also risks adding useless steps along the way that are very difficult to change later on.

#### 5. Automation Requires Expert Teams



In addition to the lengthy process and sizable budget required to implement automation in an organization's process, a company needs to appoint a dedicated team to monitor and maintain it. Members of the team will need to go through training to understand the implementation and how it works.

As an investment, the process is necessary and is usually worth the cost. However, it can have repercussions like employee replacement issues, lack of a talent pool, etc. When you are spending more to maintain and optimize an automated solution than it

provides in value, there is a big problem.

## 6. Change is Difficult



Automation is a fixed process applied to repetitive, structured tasks. When there is a change in an organization's core business processes, it is difficult for the company to replicate the change in its automation. BPM, in a way, is a form of change management and cannot resist change in processes. Similarly, human processes can easily adapt to changes in the environment and can create improvised solutions. Reshuffling automation can be a tough challenge for an organization and teams within it when there is a requirement for transitioning a business.

## 7. Automation Cannot Fix Everything

Companies often seek automation for processes that are better off being human-driven. Even if an automation process is customized to fit a company's needs, it can be counterintuitive to apply something to a process that is better left unruffled. In enterprises, automation cannot capture every process correctly. If 70% of process is automated, for example, the remaining 30% might not be fit for automation,

creating disorder in the existing organizational process. The forced automation might require a high cost of quality assurance and maintenance expense, adding to the woes of the C-suite management.

Also, automation cannot fix office politics, poor infrastructure, insufficient training, and bad management.

One way to overcome most of these challenges is to choose a human-centric software solution. You can find reasonably priced software that make it easy for business leaders to create, edit, and optimize their own automated business processes. This significantly reduces a lot of the cost issues and the inability to quickly change a process.

If you are considering using a [business process automation tool](#), be aware of the dangers of trying to apply automation to everything. You will end up in worse shape than you began.

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