UiPath™

PUBLIC SECTOR-UK

Robotic Process Automation: Transforming Central And Local Government

Contents

Automation In The Public Sector

The case for automation in UK's public sector has never been stronger.

Substantial and continuing budget cuts to reduce Government debt are proving a major stimulus to innovation, along with the shift to digital interaction in all spheres of life.

Led by Civil Service decision-makers with technological savvy and commercial experience, **there is now intense focus on the potentially immense gains that robotic process automation can deliver** to meet these challenges in the public sector.

In a widely reported speech, the UK's top mandarin, Sir John Manzoni, specifically highlighted the role of robot technology in bringing into reality the desired transformation of the Civil Service that he heads.

"Many of our services will begin to benefit from the huge potential of robotics – or, more accurately, robotic process automation (RPA)," he said. "In speed and accuracy of response, RPA could transform the experience of citizens registering for services or applying for grants of benefits."[1]

This urgency in the cause of automation has led the Civil Service to establish an RPA centre of excellence to accelerate adoption. Established in partnership with Capgemini, its aim is to educate civil servants about RPA and to help departments take their first steps towards developing RPA capabilities.

> *"In speed and accuracy of response, RPA could transform the experience of citizens registering for services or applying for grants of benefits."*[2]
>
> — Sir John Manzoni

[1-2] https://quarterly.blog.gov.uk/2018/03/28/robots-lend-government-a-helping-hand/

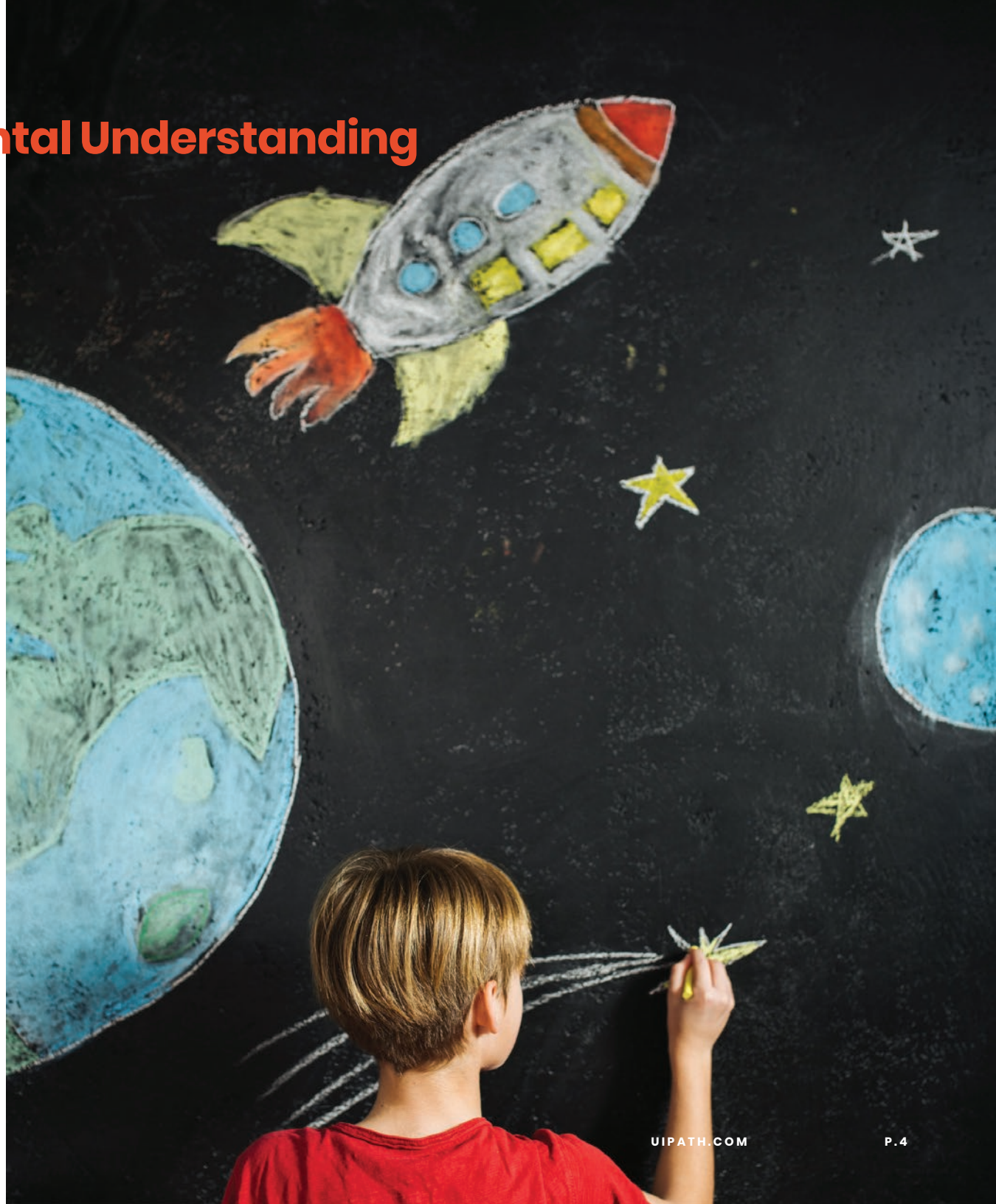
Growing Governmental Understanding of RPA's Potential

All around the world, the penny has dropped and governments are investing in cutting-edge, automation initiatives that have the potential to bring the public sector the same efficiency gains being delivered in business and industry.

In the Middle East, Dubai, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar all have "Vision" projects that seek to transform the operations of government through digital technology as they switch from reliance on oil and gas to more sustainable, technology-based economies. RPA is an important part of these strategies.

In the US, major initiatives are afoot. The Department of Treasury for example, has collaborated with UiPath to reduce processing time for a set of routine duties performed by its clerical staff by 86 percent.[3]

In the UK, however, although there are important trailblazers such as HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA), government at both local and national levels is lagging behind other industries which have a high volume of clerical work that can be performed far more efficiently by software robots.



[3] https://www.uipath.com/solutions/industry/public-sector-automation

The Huge Potential For Robotic Process Automation in the Public Sector

Harnessing the power of RPA, the public sector can transform its efficiency by automating a huge range of administrative tasks. With severe downward pressure on finances and a workforce of 5.4 million[4], (of which 2.1 million work in local government and 1.6 million in the NHS) the potential for automation is substantial, given the heavily process-driven, repetitive nature of much of the work performed.

It has been estimated that only about a fifth of public sector workers undertake strategic work requiring analytical thinking. Deloitte in its 2016 report estimated that 1.3 million repetitive and administrative jobs in the public sector (27 percent of the workforce) had a 77 percent probability of being automated.[5] Frey and Osbourne in their study of the future of employment, calculated a 96 percent chance of Whitehall's 137,460 administrative roles being automated. In the NHS they could foresee an 81 percent chance of automation for NHS administrators.[6]

RPA works because of its speed, accuracy and simplicity. It mimics the work of human staff, but is faster by several orders of magnitude, is almost faultless and never takes holidays or sick days.

RPA software robots log into applications, move files and folders, copy and paste data, fill in forms, extract structured and semi-structured data from documents and scrape browsers. This is only the most obvious of their roles. The technology is also non-intrusive in nature, helping cut through the complexity of legacy systems, with intuitive user-interfaces.

The range of use cases for RPA in government is vast. The technology can be deployed for tax calculations, revenue-collection, permit and planning applications, case-management, contract administration and intelligence-reporting. **It will transform the efficiency of HR, IT and finance departments, payroll, accounts payable, the collection and administration of fines, pensions,** all types of benefit application and payment, and the routine administrative operations that support local government, the police, NHS and social care.

In the Trelleborg municipality in Sweden, UiPath has collaborated with the local authority to automate processes relating to home care applications, sickness and unemployment benefit payments and the administration of taxes and duties. The results are impressive. Time-saving of 79 percent has been achieved in the social services department and 95 percent in labour market initiatives. These gains have been achieved by an authority with an expanding population, as 12 percent more citizens began work or commenced studies.[7]

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[4] https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/sep/03/who-works-where-uk-public-sector

[5] https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/press-releases/articles/automation-set-to-transform-public-services.html

[6] https://www.cbronline.com/internet-of-things/automation-robots-replace-250000-public-sector-workers-next-15-years/

[7] https://www.uipath.com/solutions/industry/public-sector-automation

The Public Sector Should Consider The Gains Delivered In Insurance

Why should the public sector miss out on the efficiencies that an industry such as insurance is obtaining through RPA?

UiPath has excelled at document management in insurance, achieving for one insurer a 600 percent increase in speed across 98 percent of cases.[8] Another FTSE500 insurer has saved the equivalent of 120 full-time equivalent roles through automation.[9]

Just as insurers are removing the administrative costs and drags on efficiency through RPA implementation, so should the UK's public sector. Through its ability to cross-reference data from different sources faster and at higher volumes than any human, the technology spots fraud and errors with almost perfect accuracy.

The Digital Public-Sector Employee

Given the huge productivity gains it delivers, RPA will usher in the era of the digital civil servant or local government officer, in which repeatable, rule-based workflows are automated in a relatively quick implementation period. With digital assistants, public sector staff can provide the type of fast, accurate service that citizens have come to expect from private businesses.

The implementation has already begun. UiPath RPA technology is now deployed in six central government departments, multiple local authorities and the UK's largest police force. Its speed and accuracy are providing frontline benefits and a better, less time-consuming, experience for citizens. This is important, because for the most part, consumers only interact with public organisations because they have to. Ensuring their experience is as hassle-free and productive as possible is vital in the age of heightened consumer expectations.

[8] https://www.uipath.com/blog/rpa-improving-productivity-in-insurance-industry

[9] https://www.uipath.com/blog/rpa-improving-productivity-in-insurance-industry

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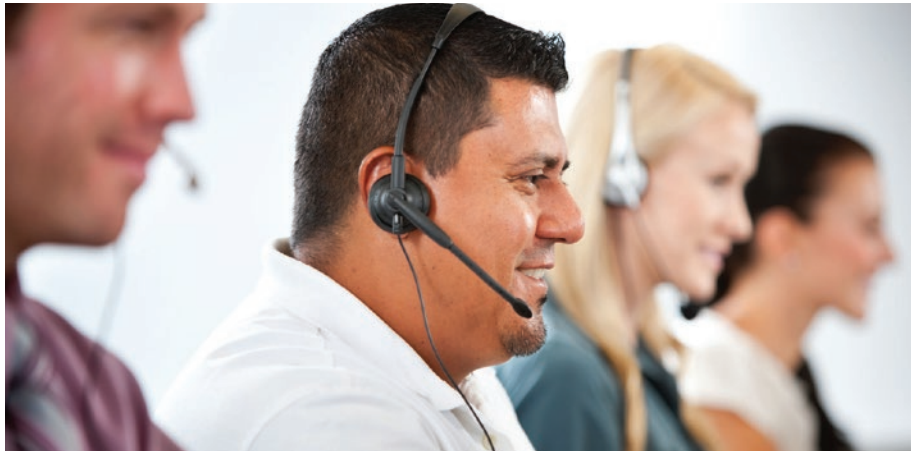

HMRC Is Blazing The Trail In Government

Rather than making drastic reductions in headcount, **RPA technology in the public sector is being deployed to increase efficiency and reduce costs.** Its flexibility, scalability and more efficient allocation of resources give employers immense gains such as, for example, the ability to avoid having to employ temporary staff at peak periods.

The time taken on individual tasks is slashed or, in some cases, the tasks are entirely automated. As an example, a survey by HMRC found 130 different tasks with high potential to benefit from automation. By bringing more IT and automation talent in-house, the HMRC is targeting annual savings of £200 million by 2021.[10] HMRC has now been working with robotics for several years and has deployed more than 11,500 robots across nearly 60 processes,[11] including its system for registering new employers.

Within HMRC, call centre agents using RPA are able to access data far more quickly, with fewer clicks and greater speed, leading to faster resolution of customer queries and complaints.

The NHS

In the NHS, RPA removes the drudgery associated with record-keeping and a host of back-office tasks. The overhaul of business processes in this vast organisation through RPA implementation will free up staff time and financial savings for frontline care, tackling head-on many of the pressures identified in last year's annual report from the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This found the NHS to be operating at "full stretch" and facing "unprecedented pressure on the system".[12] Even for nurses, the burden of record-keeping can be a source of time-consuming inefficiency. This is a burden RPA can remove.

As patient numbers increase, and medical inflation outstrips the rises in retail and consumer prices, securing efficiencies through RPA is essential. Inventory management, patient file-handling, appointment-scheduling and the administrative organisation of clinical care can all be automated. McKinsey estimates that 36 percent of administrative functions in healthcare can be transformed in this way.[13] For the NHS, this is estimated to equate to a saving of £495 million each year." [14]

[10] https://quarterly.blog.gov.uk/2018/03/28/robots-lend-government-a-helping-hand/

[11] https://quarterly.blog.gov.uk/2018/03/28/robots-lend-government-a-helping-hand/

[12] https://www.cqc.org.uk/news/releases/most-people-still-getting-good-care-%E2%80%93-health-care-system-%E2%80%98straining-seams%E2%80%99-making

[13] https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/digital-mckinsey/our-insights/where-machines-could-replace-humans-and-where-they-cant-yet

[14] https://www.hfsresearch.com/pointsofview/how-the-nhs-could-save-650m-using-rpa-to-combat-complexity-save-money-and-bring-admin-staff-back-from-the-edge

Local Government

In local government, most of the thousands of routine tasks can be automated, from processing application forms for planning matters or benefits to updating address and personal details for millions of council tax customers and electors. Administering council tax in all its complexities and discounts is the kind of data-processing drudgery at which RPA will excel.

The technology is particularly well-suited to local government, given the many different software applications in place at each authority. Easily integrated without wholesale replacement of systems, RPA will pull in data from all sources without problem and far more efficiently than any human employee. The single view of the citizen becomes a reality – an important gain when there is huge emphasis on joined-up working between local government, social services and the NHS.

Collaboration between authorities is leading to pioneering work. Surrey, East Sussex, Brighton and Hove councils have embarked on an award-winning RPA project. The collaboration has fostered the creation of a dedicated "Bot Lab" where all possible options are considered and evaluated. More than 3,000 core processes are being examined with an average of 15 steps per process.[15] Agile methodology has been adopted, along with a focus on convincing a sceptical workforce that they will benefit from automation.

Administering council tax in all its complexities and discounts is the kind of data-processing drudgery at which RPA will excel.

Right across local government, as more interactions with the citizen shift online, RPA will become a necessity.

[15] https://www.thinkdigitalpartners.com/news/2018/05/02/councils-robotic-process-automation-rpa/

Freeing Up Police Forces

In the UK's police forces, RPA will relieve officers and civilian support staff from repetitive, transactional and time-consuming processes, boosting accuracy in administering fines and the handling of evidence. How often is it heard that front-line police officers are suffocating in red-tape and paperwork?

The police must also routinely interact with many other state organisations, such as the Crown Prosecution Service, where RPA has the power to eliminate time-consuming drudgery associated with the administration and processing of cases.

Consultants Deloitte reviewed how the technology could transform operations in this field. They found that the automation of traffic offences, updating alcohol licences, completing character inquiries, supporting crime-reporting, auditing intelligence systems, and provision of support to the fight against cyber-crime were all areas where RPA should have immediate impact.

Their conclusion is that: "RPA will play an important role for forces over the next decade, particularly as crimes become increasingly complex and costly to investigate." [16]

As technology, such as body-worn cameras, is used to gather evidence, the capability of RPA to sift through masses of unstructured data will make it a vital tool.

[16] https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/uk/Documents/Innovation/deloitte-uk-innovation-the-new-machinery-of-govt.pdf

RPA has the power to eliminate time-consuming drudgery associated with the administration and processing of cases.

Facing The Public

RPA is already proving its worth in customer service functions. In a contact centre, for example, an attended robot (one under the direction of an employee) can instantly find information and automatically retrieve cases while the agent is on the phone with a member of the public, answering a complex query about income or council tax, benefits, school assessments or care provision.

Unattended robots, meanwhile can self-trigger many types of scheduled work. Once they complete a certain task, they can be automatically re-assigned to a different one, since idleness is not a term known to RPA.

And once allied to artificial intelligence capabilities, software robots are capable of more advanced, predictive functions, such as anticipating the nature of queries from individual members of the public, automatically providing agents with the relevant information for resolution.

Fast Implementation To Tackle GDPR, Brexit And Future Regulation

These advanced capabilities automate compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and its severe rules about protecting personal data, which is an essential consideration throughout the public sector.

RPA's ability to work its rapidly way through masses of data and adhere to the rules it is set is an immense advantage that can save an organisation from heavy fines for mishandling or exposing personal information.

Consider how advantageous it will be for all branches of the public sector to have these capabilities after Britain leaves the EU. Whatever form that takes, new rules and regulations administered by the UK will require the processing and policing of a vast amount of new information covering every aspect of trade, business and the movement of private citizens. This will probably have to be implemented very quickly.

Once they complete a certain task, [RPA Robots] can be automatically re-assigned to a different one, since idleness is not a term known to RPA.

Implementation

From the employer's perspective, the thought of implementing RPA immediately throws up many potential political pitfalls as staff become anxious about job losses, with the potential for industrial action and the involvement of trade unions. Research by UiPath among public sector workers this year, however, found that where RPA had been implemented in the public sector, almost three-quarters of respondents (74 percent) thought the impact on their role had been positive.[17]

What emerges as important in any programme of RPA implementation is communication with the workforce. It is vital to explain the benefits and to stress that automation will free up employees to undertake more valuable case work, problem-resolution or strategic tasks.

A vital consideration for employers is that while other technologies require wholesale replacement of systems, RPA, which does not require coding skills for implementation, can be deployed on top of legacy IT and will be fully functioning within weeks. Modernising the IT estate may be a long-term aim in government, but RPA can bring business benefits in a single financial year.

While most departments have plans to replace or are already changing or re-engineering systems which can be 40 years old, for some, "rip-and-replace" is not viable. Given the budgetary constraints, RPA stands out as the most obvious and effective method of achieving digital transformation on top of legacy IT.

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[17] https://www.uipath.com/solutions/whitepapers/attitudes-to-robotic-process-automation-among-uk-office-workers

RPA Will Transform Government

Overall, RPA holds out the prospect of delivering immense gains in efficiency for almost everyone in the public sector, from civil servants, local government officers, to nurses, doctors, policemen, firefighters and social services staff.

RPA will free them and their back-office support teams from the immense burdens that current manual administration of disparate processes place on them.

With RPA, transformational levels of efficiency, time and cost-saving are almost immediately realisable. Front-line staff are liberated to spend more time on customer-facing work, their roles and personal sense of job-satisfaction boosted, making for a happier and more fulfilled workforce. For the public, their interactions with government and official organisations become near-frictionless, as many of the errors and frustrations are eliminated.

The public sector is always subject to the vagaries of politics in the resources it is allocated. But if one thing is certain, RPA will deliver huge efficiency benefits to citizens right across the entire public sector while achieving immense cost-savings for the taxpayer.

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