

Rapid ROI from RPA: Synergy automates billing to realize significant value



CHALLENGE

Synergy, Western Australia's leading energy generator and retailer, identified the potential for significant benefits by automating its transactional billing processes. The process had previously been outsourced to a local third-party supplier. So, greater automation and keeping the process in house was believed to immediately deliver bottom line benefits. Other challenges included time consuming processes requiring users to access multiple systems such as SAP ERP, document management, websites and MS Office. It was identified that robotic process automation (RPA) could help automate the end to end process to realize cost savings whilst also reducing average handle times and error rates. Overall, these improvements would also improve the end customer experience.

SOLUTION

In September 2016, Synergy's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) business unit chose Automation Anywhere's RPA solution to automate its billing processes. Synergy engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) to train an internal team to deliver RPA solutions with ongoing mentoring for a further six month period. This internal team had accountability for automating the billing processes to ensure a sustainable long-term robotics solution could be maintained. Automation Anywhere proved very effective in automating end-to-end business processes and integrating with different systems. The project solution exceeded Synergy's expectations with its ease of deployment, rich command library and short learning curve. A particular strength of the technology was the ability to rapidly deploy new processes, in weeks rather than months.

BENEFITS

280+

Bots in production over a 15 month period

\$2.3M

Overall annual value

\$1.5M

Annual cash benefits

163%

ROI

99%

Reduction in errors to just .05%

40%

Reduction in billing transaction processing time

Processes Automated

- Procure to Pay
- Record to Report
- Quote to Cash

Industry
Utility

"Automation Anywhere helped us achieve significant financial recurring value in less than 15 months."

— **Scott McMahon**

Manager, ICT Strategy and Portfolio – Customer and practice lead, Robotics and Automation, Synergy

DETAILS

Synergy's RPA journey started with a pilot project for a complex billing process, to prove that Automation Anywhere could successfully interact with Synergy's core systems, particularly SAP ERP. After the success of the pilot, a business case was developed to automate numerous transactional billing processes. The initiative had three primary objectives: realize \$650,000 annual benefits within the first year by automating 80% of selected processes; reduce error rates to less than 5%; reduce average handling time of each transactional process by 20%.

All these objectives were dramatically exceeded.

Change management was a key focus of the program. Executives and senior management were highly supportive and through a series of roadshows and targeted meetings, the project gained stakeholder support at the operational management level due to better understanding of robotics and a consequent shift in mindset.

"We ran a pilot in mid-2016 with the use of RPA to execute a pretty challenging billing process in SAP. This proved so successful that we expanded our use of automation from this point onwards."

— Scott McMahon, manager, ICT Strategy and Portfolio – Customer and practice lead, Robotics and Automation, Synergy

RESULTS

Synergy has to date created more than 280 bots within a growing robot library. Overall, the initiative has streamlined billing, sped up payments, reduced debt, secured savings and reduced outsourcing costs. Synergy experienced cash ROI within months of its RPA investment.

All of this was accomplished while more effectively leveraging Synergy's existing investments in technology. For example, one bot works in SAP ERP to resolve a missing meter read, contacts Synergy's external network provider, waits for a response, works in MS Office applications and checks third party websites — all without taking a break.

Synergy also realized a number of indirect benefits from RPA, such as the ability to scale rapidly to meet spikes in workload by operating a robot workforce outside of normal business hours, reductions in average handle times and significantly reduced error rates.

Since delivering on its billing initiative, Synergy has expanded its RPA capability into sales, finance, ICT and HR functions.

LOOKING AHEAD

Synergy is planning for continued investment in artificial intelligence into the future, where IQ Bots and virtual agents will interface with RPA to provide end-to-end processes with minimal human intervention.

Synergy

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"I think investment in Automation Anywhere's IQ Bot in the future is essential, as artificial intelligence is a natural progression forward from RPA."

— Scott McMahon

Manager, ICT Strategy and Portfolio – Customer and practice lead, Robotics and Automation, Synergy

