SAP: Driving Efficiency in Data Management with Robotic Process Automation

To improve operational efficiency in its shared-services centers, the data strategy and operations team at software firm SAP SE identified, assessed, and prioritized more than 20 use cases for robotic process automation. Using SAP® Intelligent Robotic Process Automation services, the team has now implemented five use cases with tangible business results, enabling an improved employee experience and helping provide trusted enterprise data for SAP.
Improving Data Management with SAP® Intelligent Robotic Process Automation

Before: Challenges and Opportunities
• Process data change requests more efficiently and transparently
• Reduce time spent on repetitive, manual tasks by employees in shared-services centers
• Eliminate data errors due to manual data entry
• Increase the amount of time that staff can spend on high-value tasks

Why SAP
• Rapid deployment of bots within a few days, enabling quick wins
• Intuitive functionality, enabling staff to rapidly gain bot-building skills
• Support for intelligent workplace processes for shared-services center employees

After: Value-Driven Results
• Enhanced customer service with faster response times
• Better employee experience with significantly less manual work
• Increased efficiency, with thousands of hours shifted to higher-value tasks
• Improved data quality, providing more accurate, consistent, and compliant information for use in enterprise processes

“It used to be time-consuming, inconvenient, and inefficient to make data changes. But now, automation bots created quickly and easily using SAP Intelligent Robotic Process Automation save us time and effort.”
Tatevik Tadevosyan, Operations Associate, SAP SE

2x–8x
Faster processing of data change requests

11,000
Hours saved and used for higher-value tasks
Automating Manual Work to Focus on Higher-Value Tasks

Transitioning while transforming
The data strategy and operations team at SAP SE is on a journey to transform its data management practices from simply reacting to the needs of internal customers to proactively identifying and anticipating requirements. As part of this initiative, the team analyzed all of its processes using 4D-mapping techniques, providing a clear picture of what needs to be done and in what order.

A key observation was that there were many manual and repetitive tasks that prevent employees from focusing on higher-value tasks that would help the team achieve its mission of making data work for SAP.

Optimizing processes while responding to margin pressure
However, during a long-term transformation program that includes wide-scale automation through the deployment of a number of software solutions, the team recognized it must take a shorter-term transitional approach to process optimization. “Under tight margin pressure, it’s crucial to continue running day-to-day data operations while streamlining processes at the same time,” says Bastian Finkel, head of intelligent data experience at SAP. “It’s a bit like changing tires while driving on the motorway.”

Building momentum with quick wins
The data strategy and operations team decided that robotic process automation (RPA) would help it accelerate processes in a relatively short period of time. In this way, it could improve the employee experience while delivering outstanding business results to internal customers.
Identifying More Than 20 Use Cases for Data Management

Introducing the idea of RPA
The data strategy and operations team started its RPA journey by reaching out to employees in shared-services centers, running shadowing exercises, and educating people about the concept of robotic process automation. It was essential to assure employees that this was not an exercise to reduce headcount but a means to free up hours spent on nonproductive, tedious tasks and reinvest them into higher-value tasks.

Ramping-up RPA skills
A member of the team was assigned to learning how to best identify use cases for RPA from a business results perspective. This resource was also trained on how to use SAP® Intelligent Robotic Process Automation services, enabling the team to build its own bots.

Managing a portfolio of use cases
With the first use case built, the organization triggered the next round of ideas. So far, it has 26 potential use cases covering numerous data domains such as customer master data and material master data. The team established a clear portfolio process to quickly assess new ideas and qualify them as valid use cases for RPA. In addition, the process helps prioritize ideas according to their impact in terms of automation potential, savings opportunities, and the effort required to build the bots.

“The software was easy to learn, and the documentation and training helped us identify and validate RPA use cases.”
Julian Blasch, RPA Practice Lead, Data Strategy and Operations, SAP SE
Delivering Rapid Results to Help Meet Strategic Goals

Delivering efficiency gains
With five productive use cases, the data strategy and operations team has freed up 11,000 hours of manual work that it has reinvested in higher-value tasks. Depending on the use case, data change requests are also processed between two and eight times faster than before.

Enhancing data quality
Use cases cover a broad range of activities, including customer data enrichment, material data management, and the creation of consent forms. By automating tasks, the team has been able to improve on key data-quality indicators such as completeness, accuracy, consistency, and conformity.

Improving employee experiences
The response from employees in the shared-services centers has been extremely positive. Hundreds of manual switches between applications and thousands of copy-paste steps and clicks are no longer necessary. In this way, staff time is freed up to focus on the shift from reactive to proactive data maintenance by spending more time in key programs with business stakeholders.

“Every initiative that the data strategy and operations team pursues contributes to our core strategic goals around experience, efficiency, and data quality. RPA proved to be the perfect fit for us to achieve tangible results in a short period of time.”

Bastian Finkel, Head of Intelligent Data Experience, SAP SE
Scaling by Establishing an **RPA Center of Expertise**

**Establishing a rigorous portfolio process**
The data strategy and operations team is receiving new ideas for bots to support its data agents in the shared-services centers on a weekly basis. To quickly **decide on the most promising ideas**, it is following a rigorous portfolio assessment process.

**Empowering employees to build bots**
To scale its RPA adoption, the team **continues to train ambassadors for RPA** in every shared-services center globally. In this way, they can build, operate, and maintain the bots they need.

**Engaging with other lines of business**
Discussion are ongoing with other functions such as HR and finance to **exchange knowledge and expertise** in using SAP Intelligent RPA. This includes sharing ideas around **new topics**, such as combining RPA with other technologies like machine learning and optical character recognition.

**Partnering with IT**
The team plans to partner with SAP’s IT organization in developing a **clear collaboration model** with shared roles and responsibilities to help use RPA more effectively. It is also working to align with the IT organization on long-term plans for implementing software to help automate processes.