
The 5 Minute Guide to Business Automation.

AUTTO.



**Business
automation is
getting software
to do some work
so that humans
don't have to.**

What is business automation?

When people ask me what I do, I tell them I build software that makes business automation easy. They smile, nod politely, and put me down as doing something with computers. They don't know what I am talking about. And yet they should. Not because they should be interested in me (though that would be nice) but because automation is one of the three technological As transforming business today: automation, analytics and artificial Intelligence.

There are many different names for business automation, namely: business process automation, digital automation, intelligent process automation, digital transformation or robotic process automation. As you can see it's an ever-expanding list of jargon.

The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE.org) are writing the dictionary of automation (<https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/8070671>). They call business automation 'Software-based Intelligent Process Automation'. Their definition is a tortured piece of English that has clearly been written by a committee of engineers after too much coffee:

'A preconfigured software instance that combines business rules, experience-based context determination logic, and decision criteria to initiate and execute multiple interrelated human and automated processes in a dynamic context. The goal is to complete the execution of a combination of processes, activities, and tasks in one or more unrelated software systems that deliver a result or service with minimal or no human intervention.'

It's an accurate technical definition, but it is the kind of writing that makes people's eyes glaze over. Wikipedia's shot at the same job (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Business_process_automation) is a lot more comprehensible.

'Business process automation (BPA), also known as business automation or digital transformation, is the technology-enabled automation of complex business processes. It can streamline a business for simplicity, achieve digital transformation, increase service quality, improve service delivery or contain costs.'

However, I think we can be even simpler than that. My definition is:

'Business automation is getting software to do some work so that humans don't have to.'



Why automate?

Human beings are good at dealing with highly variable situations where subtle judgement, complex communication and understanding human emotions are critical.

Conversely, people are poor at doing repetitive, rule-based tasks accurately. Human beings enjoy novelty, they find repetitive work boring. So work slows, errors creep in, and employees try to find a job doing something more interesting.

Automation software loves the work that people hate. It is good at speed, repetition and accuracy. Implementing automation can reduce the time spent on tasks by 75% to 99% depending on the level of human involvement, and this has obvious business implications for reducing costs.

It is perhaps less clear, but equally vital that it can also increase the tempo at which your business operates. As software completes tasks within seconds instead of hours or days then cues staff or another automation to begin the next task, then the overall pace at which your business responds increases.

It is not only the amount of time that a member of your team spends doing a task (time spent) that can drop to near zero, but also that the 'time elapsed' between when a job was requested, and when it is completed drops rapidly. As your customers (both internal and external) are becoming more used to an 'Amazon Prime' business culture of immediate fulfilment, then the ability to deliver quickly is a competitive edge.





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How do I implement business automation in my business?

Automation software is now available for use in use all sorts of contexts. The business context for automation varies both by the volume of runs of a process and the type of technology that is currently being used to do the job. The possible software solutions for these contexts are different though, of course, the same company may encounter one or more of these situations.

You need to select the right type of software for your business situation.

A

High volume, currently using enterprise software applications
(bespoke ERP applications)



B

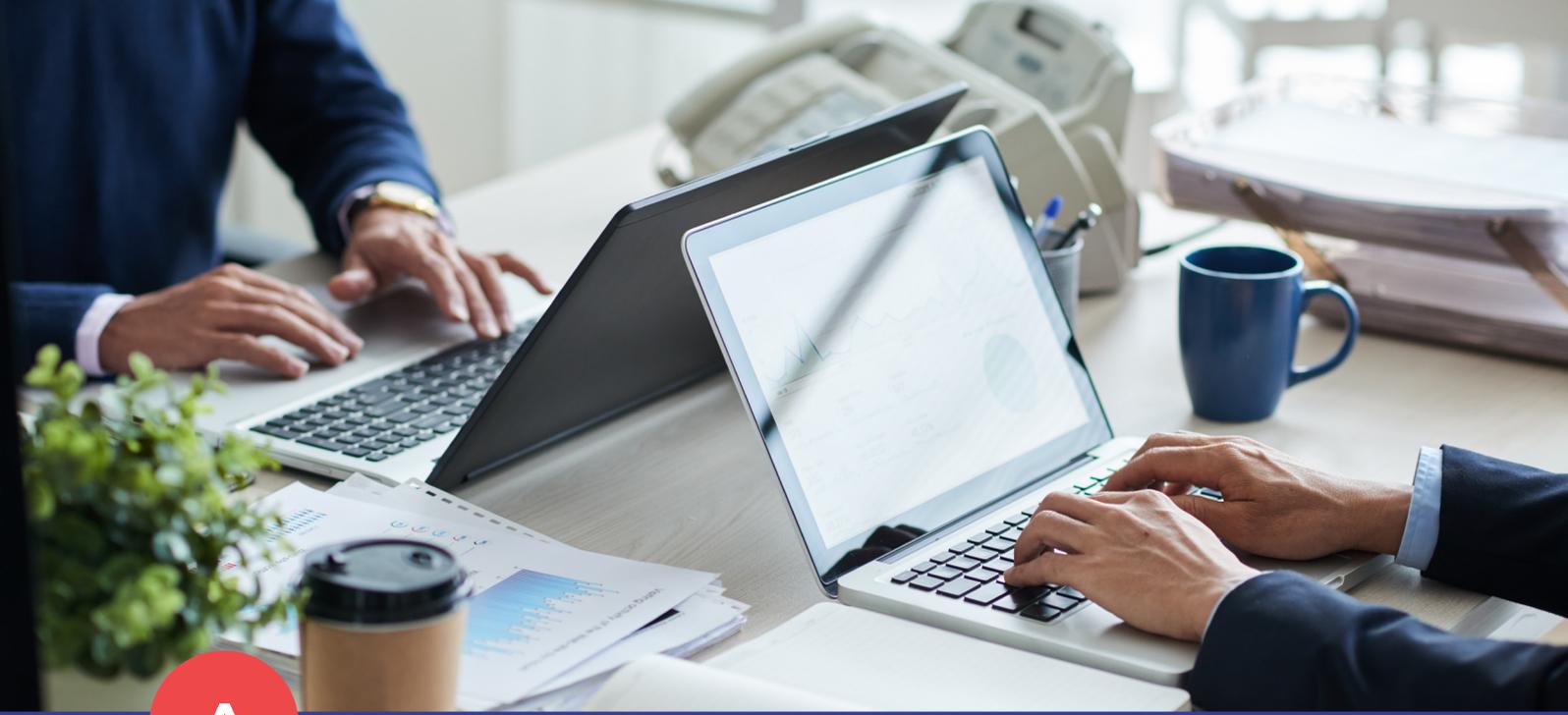
Low to high volume, currently using standard desktop and cloud software (MS Office, email, CRMs)



C

Low to medium volume, currently using no software or standard cloud software (Gsuite, online CRMs)





A

High volume, currently using enterprise software applications (bespoke ERP applications)

If you are a large business seeking to automate processes operating at a high volume of repetition and involving multiple existing computer systems, then you should be looking at robotic process automation software. Crucially this software is designed to enable automation without wholesale replacement of a business' existing software systems. The leading providers in this category are Automation Anywhere, UI Path and Blue Prism.

These are intricate pieces of software which have capabilities in API integration, desktop automation (software pretending to be a human on your existing systems) and increasingly AI. Typically implementations cost low hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars and involve a tech team or implementation partner.



Low to high volume, currently using standard desktop and cloud software (MS Office, email, CRMs)

It never ceases to amaze me the number of processes in sophisticated businesses that are still managed by people using spreadsheets as a database, MS Word for documents, email and then cut and paste between them. Importantly this is work that is not currently handled within existing enterprise software, though it may need to be triggered or provide information to it.

Typically this kind of work has been done by people because the cost of automation is too high and the processes unique to a particular business. However, the use of cloud-based low-code (simple scripting) and no-code (drag and drop) automation platforms means that companies can build, operate and support an automated system with non-technical staff and budgets from a few thousand dollars a year. It has opened intelligent automation up to companies that could not previously afford this kind of tech.

Typically the platforms in this space have a lot of flexibility and yet also allow control, audit trail and monitoring and allocating tasks to human beings. These systems will typically automate document production, calculations, task allocation, approvals, data transformation, integrations and updating records.

It is also worth distinguishing this kind of automation software from project and business process management platforms like Asana and Monday.com. These help you manage the allocation of work to employees but don't automate the work itself.

Separately, there are many cloud-based, software platforms focusing on automating marketing (Hubspot is the leader) and accounting (Receipt Bank, for example).





C

Low to medium volume, currently using no software or standard cloud software (Gsuite, online CRMs)

The entry point to automation when you have very low or no budget is software like Zapier and IFTTT (short for If That Then This). These online packages act as integrators linking many different cloud-based software services together - a Google form triggers the creation of a CRM entry and the sending of an email, for example.

Boot-strapping entrepreneurs and small businesses have created remarkably inventive combinations of applications that can automate whole products. However, the interface, control, data governance and security issues are much trickier to manage, so it is less suitable as a business matures and grows.





**Automation is
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Automation is accessible

Just over ten years after the automation revolution began, automation is now available to businesses of all sizes and all technical abilities. Now is the time to begin looking at how you can start the digitisation and automation of your business operations.

1

Pick the scope of the automation project - look for your most obvious pain point

2

Select the right context from the list above

3

Examine your vendor choices

4

Consider PoC or trial

AUTTO is a no-code automation platform. Turn your everyday, complex processes into streamlined, easy-to-use workflows so that your team can focus on doing what they love.

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