

Robotic process automation enables the era of self-service delivery

By [Andrew Hoseck](#)

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Robotic Process Automation (RPA) has existed for many years. Every time you complete an online claim, or capture an invoice on a system, or request comparative insurance quotes or flight prices, RPA is the intelligence 'engine' in the background.

Its function is to capture your data and ascribe meaning to it on the back end in order to deliver an outcome: your claim outcome, total monthly invoices or the cheapest way to get to your next overseas destination. An automated process rather than a human executing a series of tasks.



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However, RPA has traditionally been used to easily identify, allocate and respond to structured data – easily identifiable, locatable and sortable data such as that entered into pre-scripted form. Unstructured data has been more difficult to manage with RPA, as it is so varied and inconsistent. The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into RPA systems is changing this, though.

RPA evolution

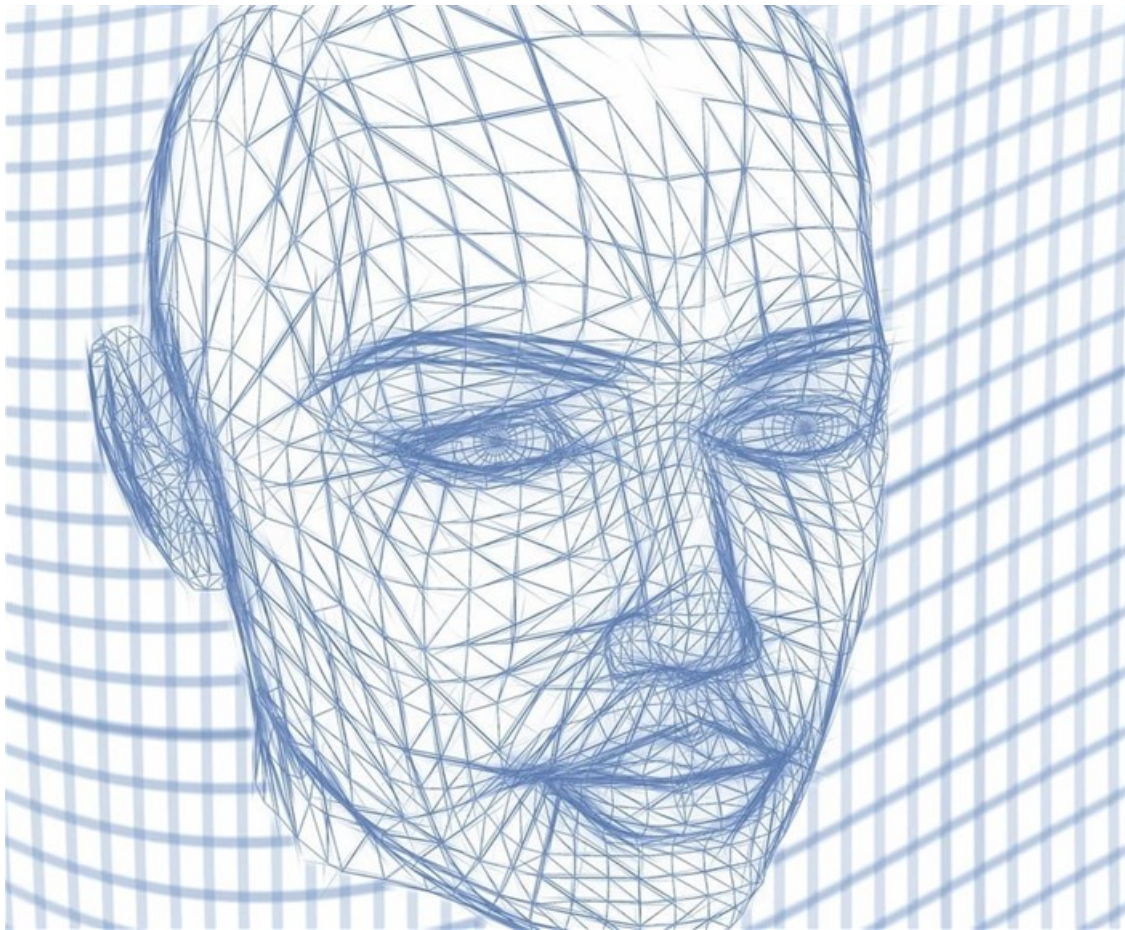
AI is helping RPA become more efficient, responsive and intuitive than ever before. For example, previously, when you scanned a new, unknown invoice into your system, the RPA wouldn't know what to do with it. This was due to the fact that the information wasn't located in the places that the RPA expected to pull the data from. The automated system failed and manual intervention was required. Now, the intelligence built into RPA helps to identify relevant data, regardless of the placement.

AI together with Machine Learning (ML) enables a robot to learn over a period of time and adapt the way it responds and reacts based on what it learns. As systems and data collection become more complex, traditional RPA simply isn't up for the task.

From being a system that simply automates a pre-programmed process, RPA is now helping businesses achieve an entirely new level of service delivery.

Making service delivery more efficient

Today's customers have become accustomed to instant gratification – a world where they can shop at any time, day or night, complete a claim or assessment whenever they have the time, do their tax return at 2am, or ask a question to a service provider as soon as they think of it.



Source: pixabay.com

In fact, we've become so used to an always on world, that we expect the predicted results of our tax return virtually immediately after completing it – results that can be delivered even if processing requires interaction with multiple systems and the completion of various tasks – thanks to RPA.

In the broadest sense, RPA – or bots – help businesses to automate processes for greater accuracy, efficiency and optimisation. This translates into faster, better service for customers.

The likes of chatbots are being used with increasing effectiveness, and people are able to interact with a chatbot for virtually any service. This enables the business to reduce queues and put the people usually assigned to a call centre to

work in more productive areas of business. It also means they can respond to their market and interact with customers without the need a 24x7 fully manned client services centre.

Chatbots are moving away from pure text bound operations, into the voice space, too. Although in testing phase with most organisations who are exploring this option, soon many businesses will be able to offer voice interactive chatbots. Customers will be able to call into a service desk and interact with a humanoid sounding robot. AI enables the robot to learn and detect voice patterns and words that signal distress, unhappiness or other emotions, and respond accordingly, either with the appropriate platitudes or by handing the call over to an actual human.

The future of service delivery

As technology advances along with better algorithms and improved connectivity, so we will draw closer to an truly intuitive RPA interface which can ensure immediate, responsive interactions with customers. Consumers may not even realise that they are dealing with an automated robot at the other end of their service query.

The question does beg: will it encourage people to trust and interact more with chatbots in the future, or will they demand human interaction? I think this remains to be seen. People will inevitably grow more used to the idea of the instant interactions achieved through RPA and likely be less inclined to seek out human interaction when it comes to customer service.

People may also end up becoming desensitised to how they interact with service delivery responders, becoming used to the lack of emotion required for dealing with a chatbot. However, it is likely that there will always still be a need for a human to be available; we are emotional beings and often, customers merely want to feel understood – something that RPA is not yet capable of. Soon, perhaps...

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