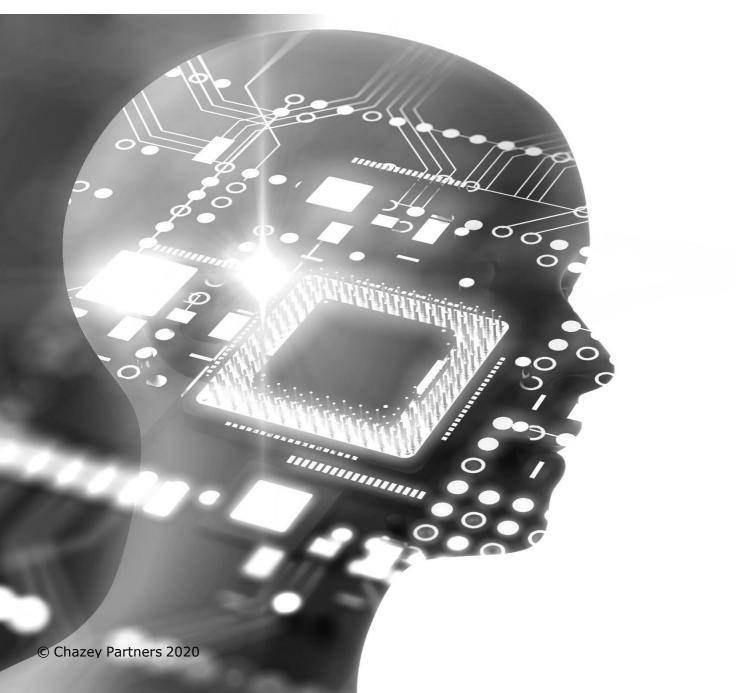# Three Core Factors **for Effective Robotic Process Automation (RPA) Change Management**
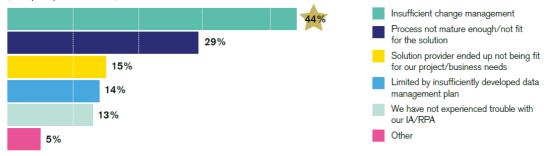
INTRODUCTION

It is indeed true that implementing Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and moving towards a digital workforce can result in significant enterprise wide upheaval; but the same is also true for many new technologies, software upgrades or process improvement initiatives. A successful transition requires carefully laying the groundwork, investing in appropriate training, managing expectations and timely communication.

Given the short implementation times and quick wins RPA can provide, organizational change management in support of RPA initiatives is commonly overlooked or granted only "nice to have" status – as opposed to recognizing that it forms a critical and vital enabler of such a potentially significant change program. Leadership teams that fail to have a change management plan in place may find RPA projects derailed early on.

The SSON Analytics' 2019 State of the Global Shared Services Market Report highlights that a lack of effective change management is one of the leading causes of RPA failure. See Figure 1 below.

Where your IA/RPA project has run into trouble, what do you attribute this to?
(multiple options chosen)

- 44% — Insufficient change management
- 29% — Process not mature enough/not fit for the solution
- 15% — Solution provider ended up not being fit for our project/business needs
- 14% — Limited by insufficiently developed data management plan
- 13% — We have not experienced trouble with our IA/RPA
- 5% — Other

[Figure 1: 2019 State of the Global Shared Services Market Report (source: SSON Analytics)]

For clarification, there are really two types of Change Management:

1. Information Technology (IT) Change Management, which is the process for controlling the lifecycle of all technology changes, enabling benefits and services while minimizing disruptions to IT services.
2. Organizational Change Management, which deals with the people aspect of change. Obtaining the acceptance of change prior, during and after a change is implemented.

The two can overlap to a certain degree, depending on the type of technology change being introduced and the organizational impact, but they are also uniquely different. This article addresses three core factors and effective tools to support Organization Change Management, to help everything come together smoothly and ensure a successful RPA program.

FACTOR 1:
Effective Stakeholder Identification and Management

An RPA deployment's ultimate success requires the full cooperation and buy-in at every level of the organization, and the very first key step of this exercise is to identify your stakeholders and secure top-level management sponsorship.
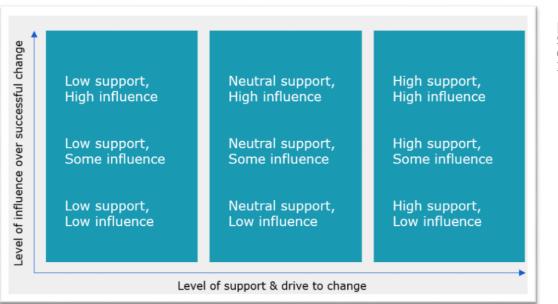
An effective Stakeholder Identification and Management approach serves three related key purposes (see also Figure 2):

1. Ensures that all key stakeholders for the project are identified
2. Determines the level of support for the project across the organization
3. Provides significant input to the Communication Strategy and Plan, based on awareness of stakeholders and their requirements.

Stakeholders should also be evaluated as to their impact and potential influence over change, and the level of support they may offer to a project. Table 1 below offers some tips in identifying your different stakeholder groups. Based on these, you can plan appropriate communication campaigns for individual groups.

[Figure 2: Stakeholder identification and management approach]

[Table 1: Stakeholder Group Identification]

FACTOR 2:
RPA Communication Strategy

A strong, consistent, and reliable communications strategy will support a smooth implementation and transition, no matter how complex the process. Communication requirements will be driven by RPA project activities, key milestones and the needs of key stakeholders, which should have been identified at the start of the project. In all communications, be clear about your purpose and intent; know which stakeholder audiences you are targeting and what you aim to achieve with the communication; and ensure you are using the correct types and channels for communication.

A detailed Communication Plan should be developed and reviewed regularly to ensure it is effective and meets the needs of stakeholders. The Communication Plan thus provides a roadmap for messages, audiences, communicators, and channels during the lifetime of the project. It should be prescriptive about the timing of messages, aligning them with key project activities/dates. The Plan is a 'living' document, and so will respond to changing needs and circumstances. It should be updated with each new project phase, or as requirements change.

An effective and successful Communication strategy is based on remembering the "3 C's":

1.   **Communication**: this is the message you are transmitting, generally one way

2.   **Consultation**: the recipient can influence and impact the message, but you have the ultimate veto over the information and final outcome

3.   **Collaboration**: you and the recipient work together and neither has final control over the output. You "share" the final outcome

A common mistake when implementing RPA is branding the communication approach as "consultation and collaboration", when it is really just a form of one-way communication. The type of communication must be appropriate for different initiatives, phases, activities, organizational cultures, and stakeholder groups. The most effective RPA change management efforts are adaptive and focused, depending on the requirements and circumstances.

In line with best practice, the communications strategy should include regular calls with various stakeholders, interactive forums where desirable, communication reviews based on these meetings, and surveying different level of stakeholders regularly.

Factor 3:
Employee Engagement Plan

Everyone involved in an RPA program, or really any change initiative, will ask, either out loud or to oneself, 'What's in it for me?'.

The internal communications team needs to play an active role by understanding the messages that need to be delivered to the overall employee population and, more importantly, to those individuals that will be impacted directly by the deployment of the new automation. It is important to analyze the inputs and outputs of the automation from an employee perspective to ensure that any activity involved with sending inputs or receiving outputs from a BOT is fully aware of the project and has been included in the project. Bots here refer to the configurable software set up to perform the tasks you assign and control.

The Chazey approach is to first understand what people are feeling and perceiving about RPA and not what management assumes. In order to achieve this, employee interviews and educational RPA workshops are powerful tools. We then build a new RPA operating model and organizational design based on leading practices. We map existing staff to the future automation state, considering retention, recruitment, transfers, attrition, displacement, and training opportunities. Ensuring new reporting relationships where BOTs are controlled/managed by employees, supervisors and functional managers, rather than IT or the project office has proven to be an effective change accelerator to support a transformation. Although close consultation and partnership with internal IT is also crucial to sustainable and scalable solutions, integration with the overall infrastructure, and enterprise wide buy-in.

Another change accelerator is to make BOTs more human and more tangible by incorporating simple ways to create human connections with the BOTs. These can take many forms including creating names for the BOTs, creating pictorials of the BOTs and displaying them in the office, bot logos, etc.

The Employee Engagement Plan sets out a recommended strategy and approach for transitioning the operation to the new "Future State" enabled by RPA, while understanding and factoring in employee impacts directly related to the implementation of this new way of working. The plan aims to minimize risks to the business during transition and support the training and transition of employees into new more value-added roles and activities, whilst also managing any redundancies or redeployments that might arise as a result of the automation program.

SUMMARY

Digital Transformation accelerated in 2019, as businesses raced to realize the benefits of expanding digitalization and automation capabilities. Intelligent Automation (IA) and Robotic Process Automation are part of this "fourth industrial revolution", resulting in much faster, accurate and consistent processes, and enabling more in-depth analysis and speedier and more intelligent decision making.

However, RPA is not a nirvana solution. There is a critical need for a comprehensive approach that entails business strategies and multi-disciplinary governance between all relevant business functions. Implementation should be part of a comprehensive strategy, with proper planning, engagement with key stakeholders, and clear management of change and resources – all supported by new operating models and frameworks to function optimally. To that end, Change Management should form a crucial part of every RPA project and at all stages of any Intelligent Automation program.

About Chazey Partners

Chazey Partners is a practitioners-led global management consulting and advisory services firm. We bring a unique blend of real-life, practical, hands-on experience, empowering our clients to strive for world-class excellence through Shared Services, Business Transformation, and Robotic Process Automation. We pride ourselves in helping businesses and public sector organizations achieve operational excellence in the delivery of mission-critical business services; including Finance, HR, IT, Procurement, Facilities Management, Call Centers, and many other support services. For over fourteen years, Chazey Partners has helped our clients implement successful service delivery solutions all over the globe

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