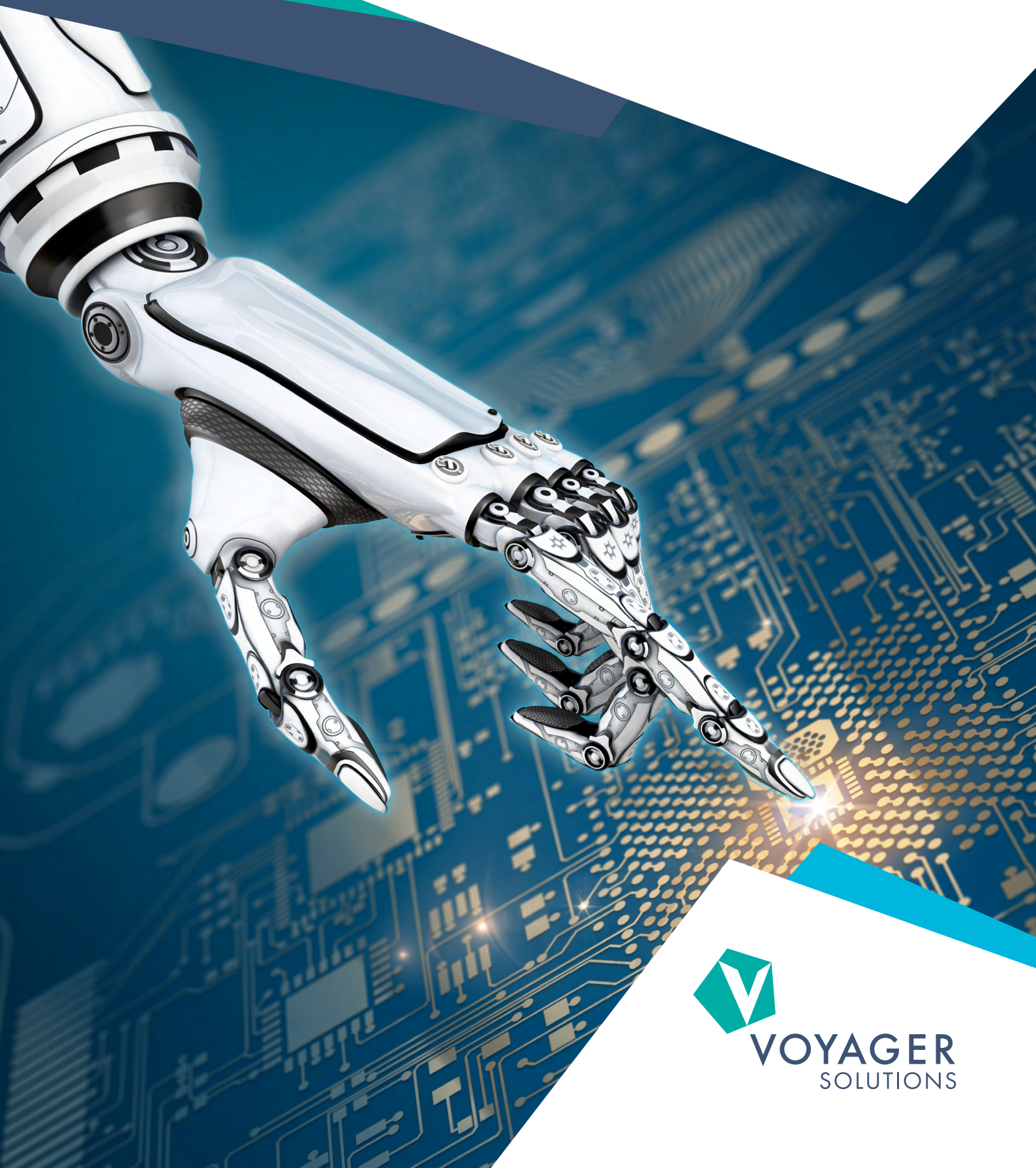
Robotic Process Automation

Reducing process costs, increasing speed and improving accuracy
Process automation with a virtual workforce



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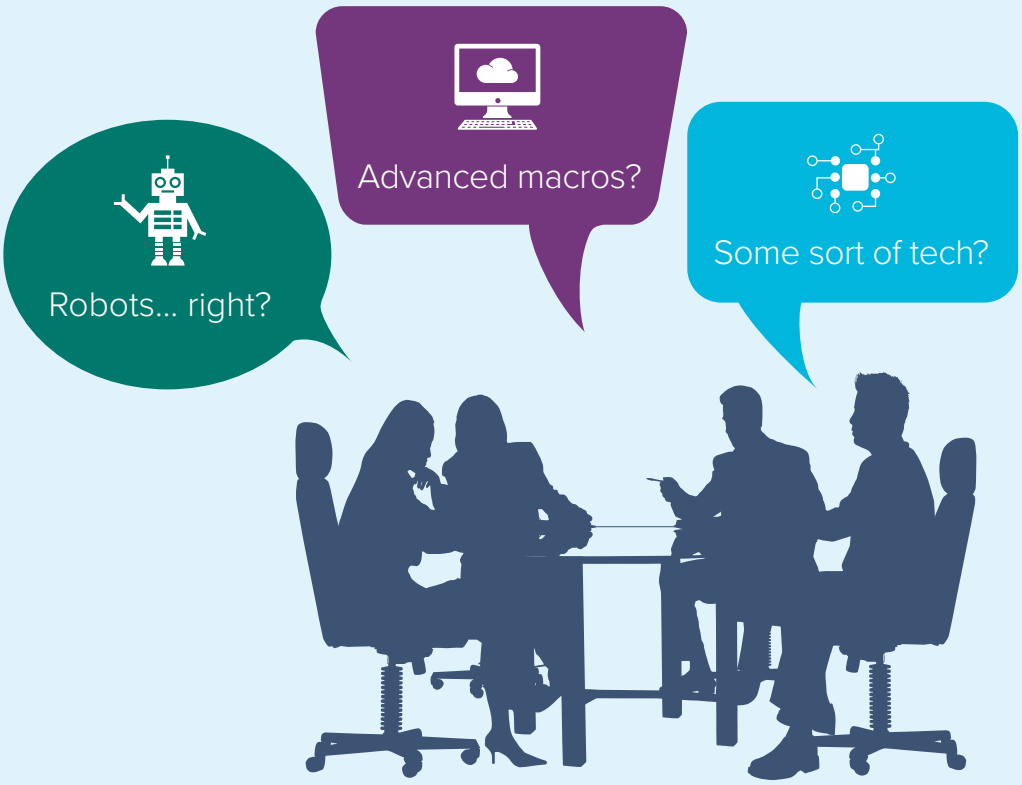
What is Robotic Process Automation (RPA)?



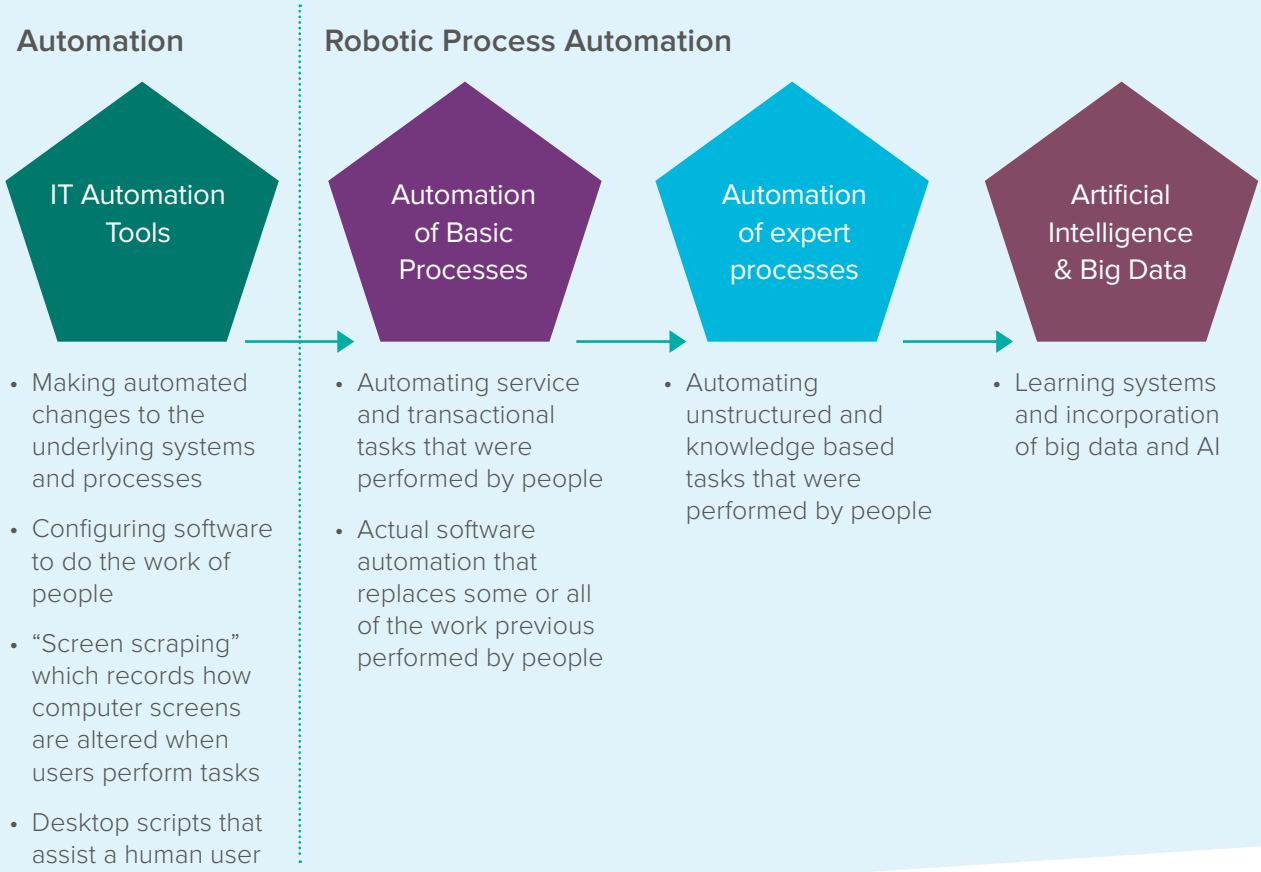
Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is a term used to explain how software can 'model' a company's processes.

RPA is the use of technology that allows a company to configure computer software or a "robot" to run applications, process transactions, manipulate data, and work with inputs and outputs in the same way that a human does. The robot is non-intrusive and functions within the same security controls and restricted access rights as your current workforce.

RPA software is not part of a company's information technology infrastructure, but rather sits on top of it. The robot manages the execution of definable, repeatable and rule-based tasks and processes, just as a human would.

In short, there are no compromises on IT security, scalability, regulatory compliance or operational governance.

The RPA journey

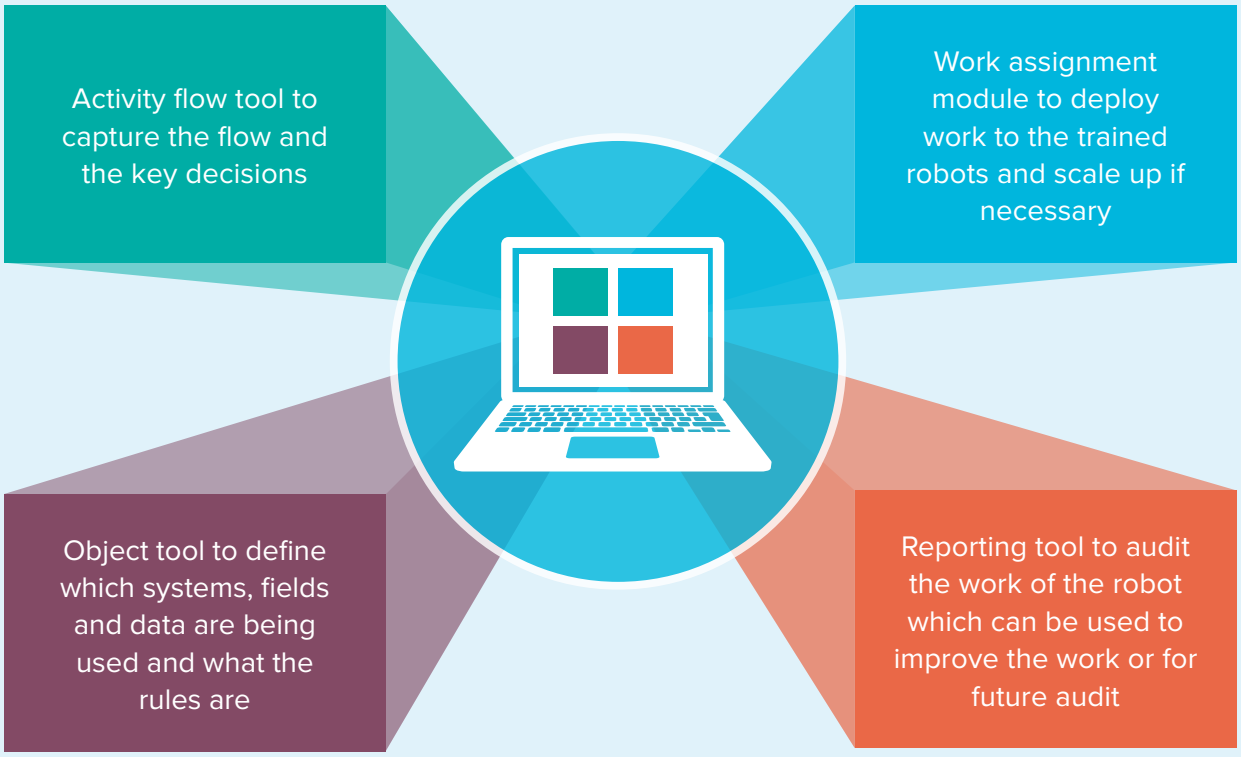


The "robot" performs tasks exactly as a user does without needing to make any changes to the underlying systems. It's as if the robot is sitting at the desk!

The biggest difference between RPA and traditional automation is that the robot will perform whatever tasks the individual user performs. Traditional automation often focusses on making existing work more efficient by changing the underlying systems.

RPA can be found in back offices where there is extensive manual activity that can be automated. Increasingly, we are seeing more advanced uses where tasks that are more knowledge based are being automated. The future will see even greater use of artificial intelligence and big data.

What does RPA software look like?



RPA software models the flow of work, training the robot to work with the various systems and to apply the required rules.

RPA software often contains a modelling tool which captures the flow, decisions, rules and inputs / outputs of the existing systems. These are defined by the business and will be followed without fail.

During the definition stage, the RPA software captures key information about the data objects being used, including specific fields and usage of key information. The robots are trained by simulating the work and applying the same rules that a human user applies. Various iterations of this makes changes to the setup of the robot until it can perform the activity with 100% accuracy.

Once the work of a robot is set up, workload can be assigned to a pool of robots each of which is an “expert” once the process has been defined and trained. Once operational, a detailed activity log and a suite of reporting provides a basis for process improvement or future audit.

What can RPA robots do?

Work with different systems

- Receive input files
- Work with databases, ERP, CRM

Reading from many systems at once

- Cross referencing
- Manually copying data

Make complex decisions

- Rule based outcomes
- Follow workflows
- Log in and out of systems

Requesting further information

- Emailing
- Texting
- Writing letters
- Scheduling calls and appointments
- Producing reports

Delivering Outputs

- Satisfying customers
- Generating revenue
- Working efficiently

The robot has logins to existing systems and follows the same flow as a human. It even sends and receives emails.

A typical back office department may have many systems including, mainframe, cloud and desktop office tools. A user will often login to a number of systems, cut and paste data between them and request information that is missing. The robot can do all of these things, and is trained with the same logic that the human user has.

The robot can work much faster than humans but, like a human, is dependent on the speed of its systems and the response times of any requests that need to come back from third parties. If it takes five minutes for the mainframe system to boot up, the robot will also have to wait five minutes, but will work much faster once underway.

Business Benefits of RPA

- Reduced direct processing cost
- Reduced indirect cost of poor data quality
- More time to conduct value added activities
- Greater visibility of processes for improvements

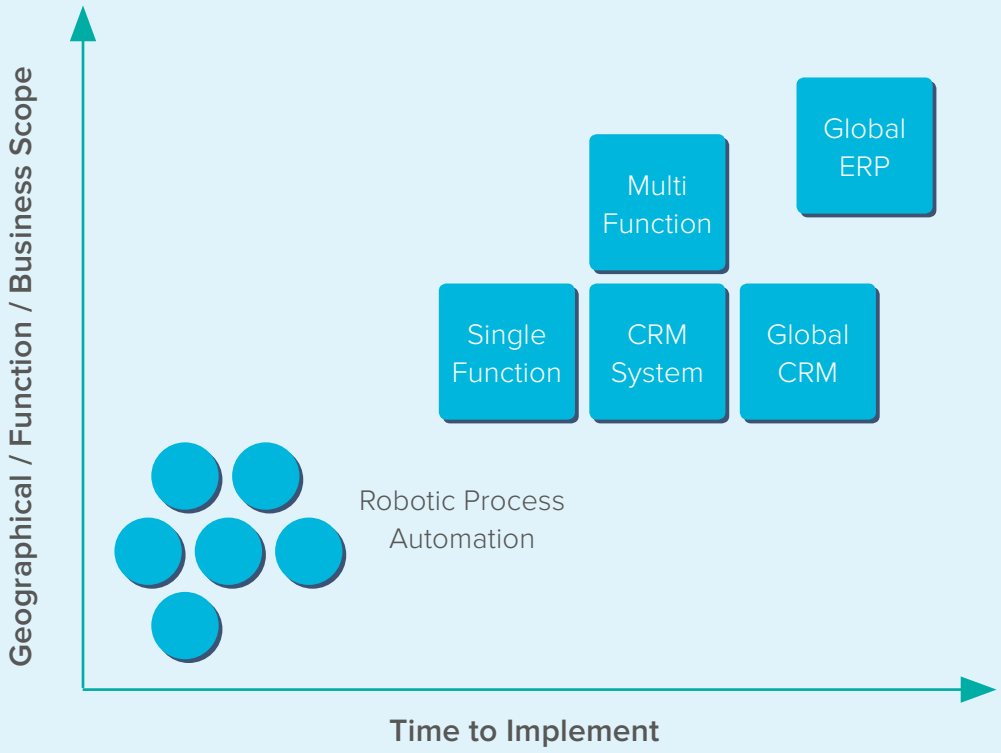
RPA has both a strategic benefit as a sourcing option, and an obvious saving in processing cost. But the benefits have a much wider scope than cost alone.

When deciding how and where to conduct key activities, RPA is often considered alongside other sourcing options. It can be an alternative to outsourcing, and can even result in work coming back in-house.

If you can predict exactly how an activity will be performed time after time, you can confidently pass an audit. RPA software provides a full log of activity which can be audited many years later which is great from a risk and control perspective.

Once you have a robot, you can scale up the number of robots very quickly. Because the process has been “taught” already, each new robot is immediately capable of executing whatever defined processes you require. Some RPA software is set up to allow any robot to perform any activity – giving you a totally flexible workforce who can follow the peaks and troughs of demand.

Implementing RPA



RPA can be deployed as a smaller scope / tactical solution where it is hard to change the underlying systems. Larger scale RPA requires clear governance and an RPA operating model is beneficial.

RPA can often be considered where a major long term system change is not possible. In the longer term, this means that strategic IT programmes are often unaffected. RPA robots can essentially execute processes in legacy systems that are due to be replaced, while waiting for new systems to be introduced.

If RPA is deployed in an area which has systems that are being replaced across a longer timeframe, the robots might be redeployed elsewhere when the longer term project replaces the original systems.

The Voyager RPA Methodology

We have an end to end approach to deployment based on our 17 years of implementation experience, and can help you from strategy through to monitoring.

RPA can be a confusing place if you have not considered it before. We have a templated approach which helps clients to consider and use RPA as part of a balanced strategy, if required.

Our tools and consultants can:

- Help to identify if RPA has a strategic role in your organisation in terms of business case, sourcing and strategy
- Work through a proof of concept to test the process, system and financial feasibility of RPA
- Take a process through a pilot in conjunction with an RPA software provider. Understand the process, people and technology impact, and plan your deployment
- Define a detailed action plan across all impacted areas and work with IT and the RPA vendor to prepare for deployment
- Deploy / scale the RPA software and processes and ensure every impacted party is ready and prepared
- Provide ongoing business case monitoring. Ensure that the support and governance exists to optimise RPA moving forward.

Further information

If you require any further information, or would like to speak to us about how we can help you, please feel free to get in touch.

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