Robotic Process Automation in Payroll

A guide to successful automation projects

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Payroll 4.0

Embracing automation technology

Technology has been improving the way we work for decades, helping people do their jobs faster and better. With advancements in automation technology, teams can now focus on higher value work.

Automation technology is already hard at work within most workplaces. Once a term associated with the manufacturing industry, after decades of advances in digital technology, there are few fields or organisational activity left untouched by it.

We've seen so many departments develop in the last few years, with digital transformation leading the agenda. Payroll has not yet made the same progress. Perhaps it's the demands of the role, or the focus on compliance, that has prevented it from keeping up with the rate of technological change.

But, things are changing. Payroll is waking up to the digital revolution. Over the last 3-5 years payroll leaders have been striving for payroll to have a seat at the C-suite table. To show that it is more than a back-office process and that it can add real value to business decisions. Leaders in the profession are starting to understand that automation technology can help them achieve the status they long for.

It's an exciting time to be a payroll leader. To make a difference in the workplace that is evolving in fundamental ways and to keep pace with the fourth industrial revolution, payroll teams not only need a seat at the table, they also need to develop skills not traditionally associated with the function. Payroll professionals need to embrace automation to help them work smarter and focus on more strategic parts of their role.

Payroll is ready, ready for payroll 4.0.

In this paper, we discuss one of the automation technologies that is transforming the way we carry out daily workplace tasks: Robotic Process Automation (RPA).

We'll cover what RPA is and the business benefits that can be achieved from its use, before busting the most common myths associated with the technology. We'll focus on how you can use RPA tools specifically for payroll tasks and how payroll teams can benefit from embracing automation technology. Get answers to the most common questions asked by your peers and receive best practice advice from automation experts.

We'll then share our predictions for the future of automation in payroll and how we believe it can advance to further benefit the profession.

This white paper will be valuable for those at the start of their automation journey and looking for advice and best practice on how RPA tools can be applied to payroll tasks.

Key takeaways:

- **Embracing automation technology will give you the time to focus on tasks that offer more strategic value to your organisation.**
- **You don't need an 'all-singing, all-dancing' system to achieve the results you want.**
- **Choose RPA tools that can scale up and down as your business needs change and technology evolves.**

About Datagraphic

We help organisations deliver digital transformation and automate the production and delivery of employee facing communications, through our secure online portal - **Epay**.

A UK SaaS company and service delivery partner for payroll and HR teams, we turn employee data into engaging multi-channel communications: online and in print.
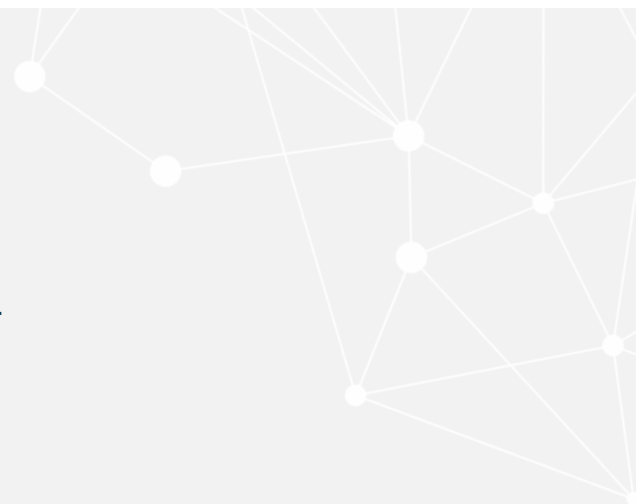
What is Robotic Process Automation (RPA)?

Improving employee tasks, not replacing them

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) is software, or a set of tools, that can be programmed to use structured data and logical rules to complete routine tasks. It's best suited for processes that are repetitive, time-critical, prone to error, data-driven and rules based.

Technology insight specialists, AI Multiple, found a typical rules-based process can be **70-80%** automated by using RPA tools.

Consider your payroll department, what are the repetitive, labour-intensive, clerical tasks that your teams are carrying out? What data do they download, update and put into different systems? What information needs to be merged, consolidated and output on employee documents? What do you need to track and monitor? And the big question is, how much time do staff spend carrying out these tasks?

A typical rules-based process can be 70-80% automated by using RPA tools

Most of these tasks are important and need completing, but aren't often core responsibilities of your payroll team. RPA can mimic human actions and automate these tasks easily, and is less disruptive than other technologies because its outcomes are often valued by employees. Think of it as a back-office processing centre but without the human resource. All those mundane tasks that your team loathe because they take a long time to complete and are distracting them from completing higher-value work, can be automated.

But remember, **RPA tools are capable of replicating 'human actions', but not 'human thinking'**. RPA tools can do the calculation, collect data, follow commands, and many other similar tasks. RPA tools can automate any tasks where instructions are written out step by step, and are clear enough to follow without any additional knowledge. Which is why a number of payroll tasks, processes with a specific set of repeated actions, are perfect for automation with RPA. But, they aren't able to make decisions based on judgement or emotion, which is why payroll teams are still needed.
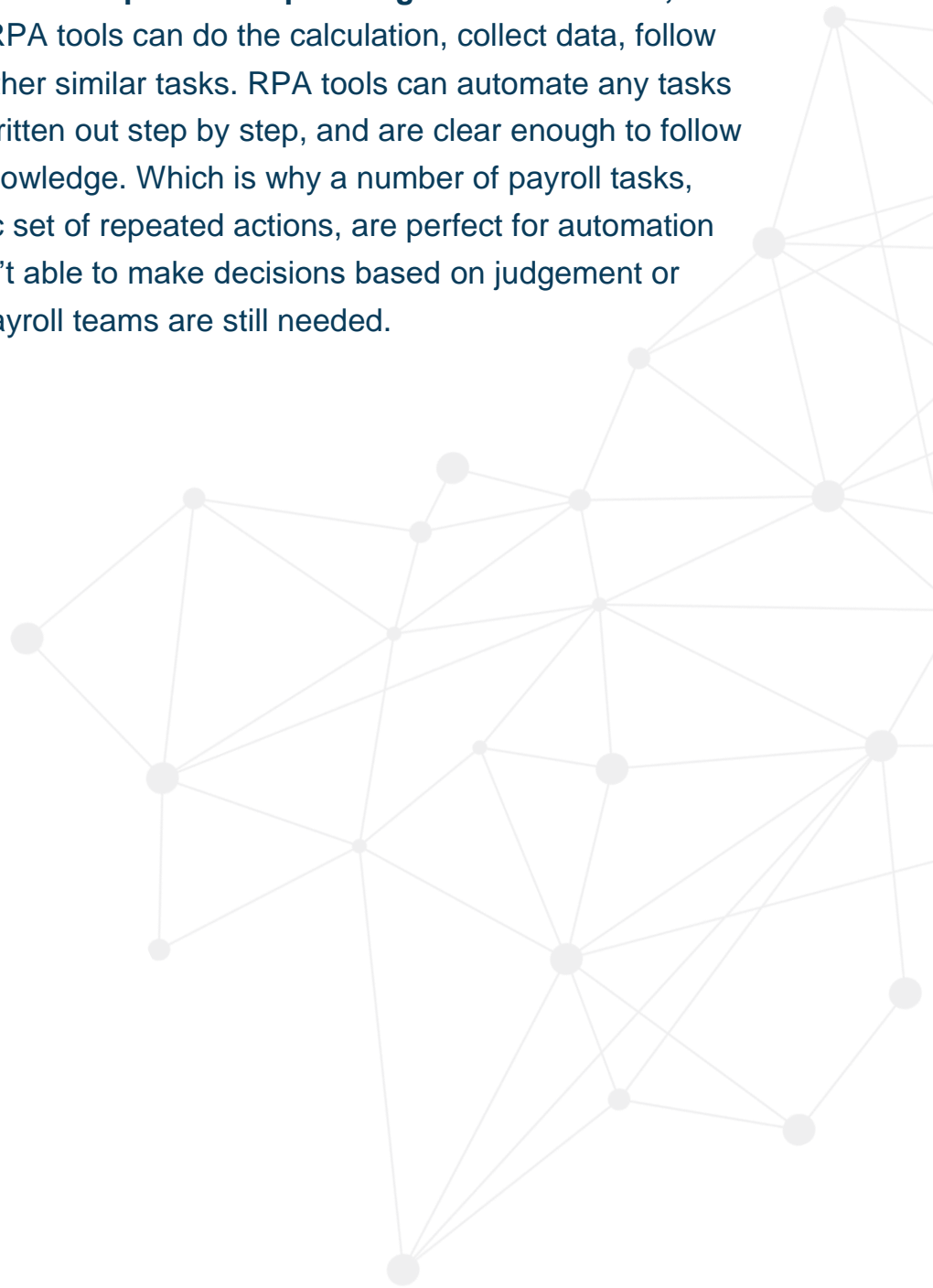
What automation technologies are available?

The differences between options available

Organisations in every industry are using software, or tools, to automate the processes that guide their daily operations as they seek the efficiencies that come from replacing manual tasks with automated ones.

For many, automation means:

- Making processes more efficient.
- Reducing operating costs.
- Minimising manual errors.

The use of automation is accelerating and widening to create opportunities for business growth, and to encourage greater creativity and innovation from employees. But it's still not widely used within all organisations. According to research by The Economist, 48% of UK respondents use technology to automate business processes extensively and 35% use it moderately. So there is still opportunity for more organisations to use automation technology in different functions.

Almost half of UK respondents use technology to extensively automate business processes

There are many different automation technologies available, and they all have their own advantages/disadvantages.

We've highlighted a few options available, and the main differences to help you learn which is best-suited for you.

Robotic Process Automation (RPA)

As mentioned previously, RPA is software, or a set of tools, that can be programmed to use structured data and logical rules to complete routine tasks.

RPA has the following characteristics:

- It is system agnostic, so it can easily work across multiple system types.
- It can work quickly as it simply uses rules and data to complete/mimic tasks.
- It is scalable, and system integration is easy.
- It is easy for everyone to use (even those of us that are non-technical!).
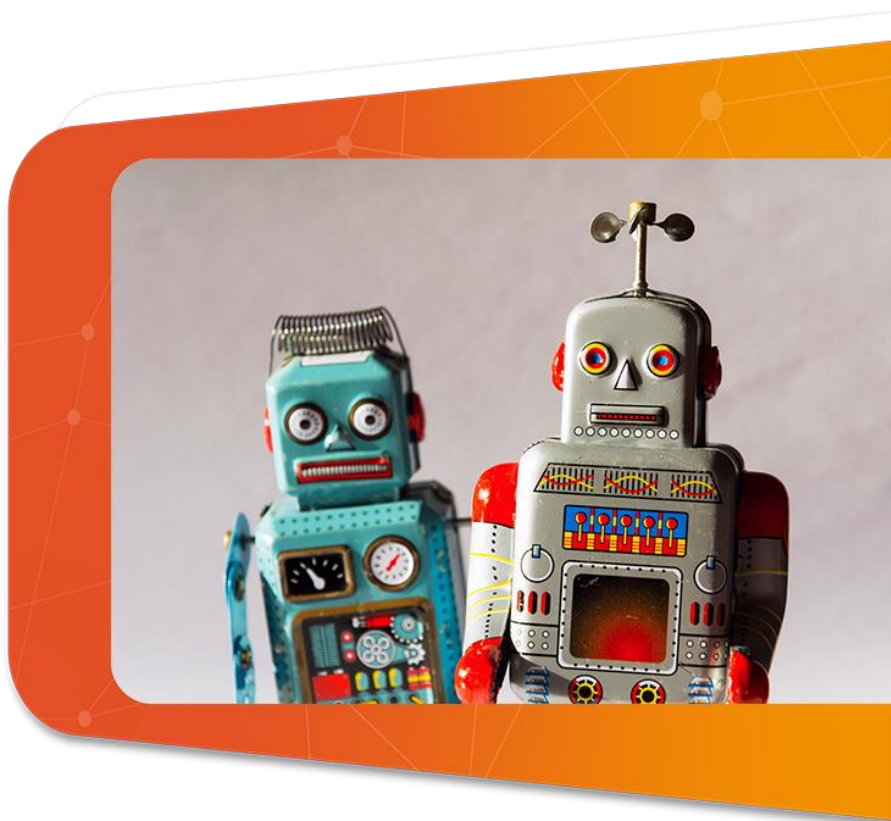
RPA technology 'bolts-on' to existing systems and we are now seeing newer systems that has this technology already built in.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Some people get confused between RPA and Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is understandable as it is one of the terms that often gets mentioned alongside RPA in conversations around automation.

AI is automation technology that can learn, interpret and analyse data, recognise patterns, make predictions, suggestions and recommendations. With RPA, you have to set rules and tell it what to do, whereas AI will 'think' and 'learn' for itself and then act on what it thinks is the correct solution.

AI is powerful, but can be very disruptive. It is typically more expensive and can take longer to implement than RPA because it requires you to understand a process in great detail and be able to build complex scenarios for intelligent automation to work from.

If you're starting on your process automation journey, be aware of AI, but it's worth considering smaller RPA projects that you can implement in weeks not years.

Traditional automation

As it suggests in the names, robotic process automation and traditional automation are both automation tools used for repetitive tasks. Traditional automation is usually applied to production workflows and can allow machinery to perform tasks.

One of the main differentiators when comparing RPA to traditional automation, is that RPA doesn't need application integration to work: so it can be implemented in weeks. Whereas, traditional automation needs application integration at a database or infrastructure level, which can take several months.

Cognitive automation (machine learning and natural language processing)

Cognitive automation is considered as a progression of AI technology. It uses AI techniques that mimic 'human' actions, to assist employees with their decision making, completing tasks or meeting goals.

The main difference between cognitive automation and RPA is that cognitive automation can automate processes that doesn't require structured data or rules-based tasks. It can make decisions based on judgement and previous learning.

The most common form of cognitive automation is used in chatbots, where it leverages natural language processing to interact with customers to answer questions and filter requests.

Cognitive automation is starting to gain traction in customer service departments and also HR. Some HR departments are using a HR virtual assistant that handles things like HR policy and general enquiries, routine transactions like position changes, and leaves of absence.

Similar to AI, cognitive automation is very clever but it is also expensive and has lengthy development and implementation cycles.

The main thing is not to get caught up in choosing a technology, but instead **focus on learning where these technologies can be put to work in your organisation** and department. Understanding your current capabilities and using the **technology that will deliver you the best results**, without large capital costs and lengthy implementation times. This is why for the majority of teams, **RPA is the most attractive automation technology**.
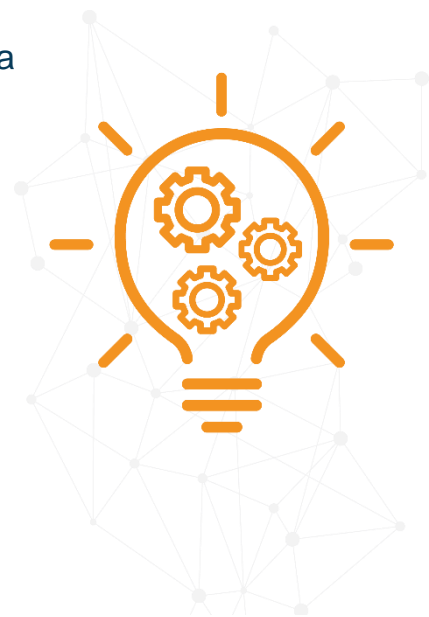
The business benefits of RPA

Evolving the way we work

Advancements in technology have allowed organisations to evolve and offer services that were once unimaginable. Organisations are now able to see an increase in speed and accuracy, whilst also reducing costs.

A logical starting point is to look at reducing the hundreds of hours that internal teams waste on mundane, repetitive, labour-intensive tasks. Things that could be automated.

Using Robotic Process Automation tools to automate internal processes offers many business benefits that can help beat off the competition. RPA can be implemented in weeks, so you can immediately see the saving potential. RPA can seamlessly integrate with existing business systems so that it can be developed and changed with ease. As well as cost savings, RPA can improve consistency, boost productivity and increase efficiency.

Cost savings	Flexibility & scalability	Improved consistency
Some organisations have reported up to 75% savings.	RPA can be scaled up or down to meet fluctuating volumes.	Repetitive tasks completed consistently can remove output variations.

Boost in productivity	Increased efficiency	Staff time refocused
A 24 hour service can be delivered with a real-time response.	Robots can complete tasks in minutes rather than hours.	Employees can focus their time on high-value work.

Busting the myths of RPA

Discover the reality

Even though we're seeing attitudes towards the use of technology in payroll changing, there are still some payroll professionals who feel nervous about using automation tools. This is because of the many myths surrounding RPA.

So, if you're feeling slightly hesitant or still have some concerns around using automation technology, then hopefully the uncovering of the following myths will put your mind at ease.

Myth #1: RPA will result in job losses

This is probably to most common myth that gets circulated. Many people worry that the technology that is helping them by completing the tedious and repetitive aspects of their job, will make the organisation question whether they are still needed. Or if there is a team of people, there will no longer be enough work for everyone.

But it's important to remember RPA is for automating tasks, not

automating roles. People will be able to accomplish more, and they can do work that is more fulfilling and adds value to their organisation.

The knowledge and experience that payroll professionals offer is never going to be redundant. What's more, the additional time and space gained thanks to automation technology will provide you with the opportunity to play a more strategic role and make a real difference to your organisation.

It simply means, that your role in payroll is likely to change. You'll spend more time managing systems, learning new legislation, and dealing with employee queries than updating spreadsheets and printing/handing out payslips.

Myth #2: RPA is a risk to data security

Data security concerns hinder automation plans more than most other factors. According to research from The Economist, the most difficult challenges faced in automating business processes is data privacy and security concerns, with **32%** of respondents from Europe choosing this.

For payroll teams handling personal and financial employee data on a daily basis, we understand why this myth might be at the forefront of minds. But this doesn't have to be a concern. RPA can actually help payroll teams meet regulatory compliance, such as the GDPR. One of the many attributes of a payroll specialist is that they are meticulous, but even the most conscientious employee can make a mistake. But RPA makes sure the right decision is made every time.

Be sure to check the credentials of your chosen RPA supplier. Do they hold the most up to date data protection and information security accreditations? This will give you added peace of mind that the confidentiality, integrity and availability of employee data is upheld.

Myth #3: RPA is the responsibility of the IT department

For your payroll automation or digital transformation project to be successful it needs input from a team of people, including payroll, HR, Finance, Management and IT.

You don't have to wait for your IT department to suggest using RPA tools. You can make your business case by demonstrating the value RPA can bring not only to your teams but also to the organisation and its employees.

RPA tools are easy to implement, so implementing them shouldn't be an IT-intensive task. But you'll want the IT team to look over the RPA tools you want to use and ask for their guidance.

Myth #4: RPA will require system changes

Almost **60%** of respondents to the CIPP Future of Payroll Report 2019 said their payroll software was five years and older. Technology advances at such a rate that it's unrealistic to think these legacy systems can keep pace. But this doesn't mean you have to change your current payroll software to benefit from RPA.

The great thing about RPA is that it can seamlessly integrate with existing business systems, including your payroll software. Think of it as a flexible and scalable bolt-on tool. Not only does this mean you don't need to change payroll systems – which we know is a costly, time-consuming and disruptive task – but it means you can start seeing the benefits much quicker.

Myth #5: RPA is expensive

Yes, as with any technology there is a financial investment, but it has been proven that the return-on-investment of RPA is much faster and higher than many other automation and emerging technologies.

There are RPA tools available for payroll teams that can be implemented in weeks, without capital costs.

Myth #6: RPA is only about cost reduction

The extent to which RPA can benefit payroll and your organisation is beyond cost savings. Whilst this is one of the many attractive benefits, RPA (when implemented successfully) can:

- Reduce the risk of errors
- Ensure regulatory compliance
- Boost employee productivity

Where can RPA be used in payroll?

Automating tasks, not the role itself

Working in payroll is complex, demanding and as technology and employee expectations change, so does the payroll task list.

Payroll is also one of the most flexible departments when it comes to adapting to change. As a profession, you're regularly challenged to understand and implement new legislation within deadlines and to present it in meaningful ways to employees and business stakeholders. The analytical and communication skills used in this process are – and will continue to be – valuable, providing a 'human' touch in a world of increasing automation and robotics.

As the task list grows, you'll increasingly turn to automation for data entry and number crunching, to release time for you to deliver higher value tasks.

**Global Payroll Association** found payroll professionals spend 40% of their time on payroll tasks that have the potential to be automated

But remember, it's the tasks within payroll that can be automated, not the role itself. You want to use automation tools to take away some of the burden.

RPA has already been used to significant effect in many different payroll functions to help with tasks like data management and validation, formatting and distributing reports and replacing manual, spreadsheet-based tasks. In

particular the following areas are seeing tangible benefits from more automated and rules-driven processing:

- New starters/leavers
- Attendance records
- Absence records
- Holiday records
- Deductions (pension, loans and taxes)
- Auto-enrolment

Automating the distribution of payroll documents

Another area automation tools can significantly improve is the distribution of payroll documents. Let's consider the communications you send to employees, for example, payslips, P60s and pay award letters. With a hybrid workforce (a mix of employees working in the office and at home), your employee document distribution process may be fragmented, expensive and open to risk of non-compliance with legal obligations. By automating production and distribution using RPA tools, these documents can be presented in print or digitally in a fraction of the time, releasing days of resource for you to focus on other priority projects.

When providing examples of business processes to automate, many RPA experts and vendors focus on inbound communication, the information that comes in to your business, for example taking a document, scanning it, analysing the content and inputting the information into one of your operating systems.

There is no denying there are many benefits associated with this automation process. However the scope, content and layouts can be very broad and you can't control the business systems that are producing them. Therefore the RPA tool you choose to implement will have to be able to cope with many

different formats. This makes your automation project more complex, require more intensive testing and will take longer to implement.

If you compare this with outbound communications, the information you send out of the business to employees, such as payslips, P60s, time-sheets etc. they come from centralised business systems. You have great knowledge of the people and processes involved in that activity, as a result your automation project is much smaller.

Chatbots in Payroll

One automation tool that is yet to kick off in payroll is the use of chatbots for payroll enquiries. In the CIPP Future of Payroll Report 2020, only **2%** of responders said, in their department, queries were received through an online chat facility with automated standard responses being sent via a chatbot.

Only 2% of payroll departments are currently using an online chat facility with automated responses

Chatbots could help lighten the burden on payroll teams by helping answer employee enquiries, especially at busy periods (i.e. payday). But there is also the perception that employees would rather speak to their payroll department in person, especially if it's to do with something sensitive like their pay information.

This is where automating the delivery of payroll documents could be a great first-step. Pre-empting employees' needs for information can help reduce the overall volume of enquiries. Providing useful information that is accessible 24/7 on the device of the employees' choice, makes interacting with payroll easier and reduces enquiries. And as a result, decreases the workload on payroll teams, further increasing efficiency and releasing time to focus on more strategic work.

Benefits of using RPA in payroll

Letting teams focus on higher value work

Whether you view technology as a friend or foe, it's undoubtedly shaping payroll, and you'll increasingly use it for data entry and number crunching, to release time for you to deliver higher-value tasks.

This doesn't mean that RPA will be able to handle all aspects of modern payroll, but it can definitely take away the more tedious and repetitive tasks.

With automated payroll processes, you no longer need to sift through numerous reports and coordinate information. You can now oversee and check the automated processes, whilst focusing on the more 'human' element of the role, such as handling employee enquiries and offering support.

78% of payroll professionals believe that technological advances will make individuals and their payroll team more effective

There are many reasons why RPA should be used in payroll. To help you create a strong business case that will make it hard for senior stakeholders in your organisation to deny, we've listed the top benefits:

1. **RPA is non-invasive technology**

   Payroll software is vital for data capture, calculations and reports. Your teams rely on it to help pay people. It contains a wealth of data that with the right help can output information which employees' value. Any change

Non-invasive technology

RPA works with your existing payroll systems, so no change is needed.

Seamless integration

RPA is not reliant on existing software to work. So it can be developed and changed with ease.

Improved accuracy

RPA can help you meet deadlines. The right results, decision or calculation is made everytime.

Tasks completed in minutes

RPA can complete tasks, that previously took hours, in a fraction of the time.

Low-cost, high-outcome solution

RPA can be live in weeks so no need for disruptive or lengthy change projects.

to the software can cause disruption and often comes with a considerable price tag. But for RPA to work, no change is required from your existing systems, which leads to considerable saving potentials.

2. **RPA can seamlessly integrate with your existing payroll systems**

RPA can work without any reliance on your existing software or systems. This means it can be developed and changed with ease. So, if you want to add or amend an automation process then you can easily and quickly.

3. **RPA works perfectly with industry expectation of accuracy and punctuality**

Payroll is known for paying people accurately and on-time, but on occasion, even the most conscientious and driven employees can make mistakes. RPA can help your teams meet deadlines, without the long extra

hours worked. It means the right result, decision or calculation is made every time.

4. **RPA completes payroll tasks in minutes**

   Tasks, such as payslip distribution, that previously took your teams hours to complete can now take seconds or minutes to complete by using RPA technology. So, you've got more time to focus on new projects, analyse employee data to provide insight into other areas of the business such as finance and HR—all without having to worry about completing the repetitive, administrative payroll tasks.

5. **RPA is a low-cost, high-outcome solution**

   Not only will automation technology help you become more productive and efficient, RPA is a low-cost, high-outcome solution. There are Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions available that seamlessly integrate with your systems and can be live in weeks, so there's no need for disruptive or lengthy change projects.

FAQs about RPA in payroll

The most common questions answered

We've rounded up the most frequently asked questions from your payroll peers that get asked about RPA in payroll.

Q. How quickly can RPA be up and running?

Due to the flexibility of RPA, it can be set up and ready to go in weeks. But it does depend on the complexity of the project and how well you know the process you want the RPA technology to mimic. Do your research and make sure you choose a third-party supplier who can work with you from set-up to delivery and who will take the time to understand your needs and then provide an accurate timescale.

Many providers can implement RPA solutions without lengthy software change projects and no capital costs, so you can be up and running in weeks and seeing results in as little as months.

Q. How much does RPA cost?

Compared to other automation technology, such as AI, RPA is a low-cost option. Depending on the size of your project, some organisations might only spend a few hundred pounds each year, whereas others will spend thousands. When working with a third-party supplier, a typical cost breakdown consists of a set-up and implementation fee, and then a monthly service charge.

As with many providers of RPA technology, you shouldn't need to buy any new software, there are no consultancy fees to pay or hardware to purchase, so the cost of set-up and ownership can be very competitive.

Q. Will using RPA result in job losses?

No. RPA technology should not replace 'human' jobs but work alongside and complement them. RPA will streamline processes and deliver data-driven insights. This will open the door for Payroll Managers to focus their skills on more strategic and creative roles – which 'robots' can't do! As examples, we could see Payroll Managers as Data Analysts: providing strategic insight to the board or Reward Partners: communicating financial and well-being information to educate employees.

Q. Does RPA work with legacy payroll systems?

The great benefit of using RPA in payroll is that you don't have to change your current payroll systems for it to work. There are Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions available that provide automation technology that seamlessly integrates with your existing payroll system – no matter how long you've had the system in place.

Choose a solution that can take data from your existing systems in any format: XML, CSV, TXT, PDF, DOCX files and more. Before you choose a supplier, ask to send a test file to give you an indication of whether the data is useable.

Q. What do I need to start using RPA?

RPA doesn't have to be a big, costly project that will take years to implement. Think big, but start small. You're more likely to achieve automation success by piloting smaller projects first, learning from them and then building on them. Begin your journey by assessing your processes and understanding which ones will benefit from being automated. Don't automate complex, varied, creative or personal tasks.

You'll need buy-in from other departments across the business including, the C-suite. To gain their approvals, you need to understand what RPA will mean for your business, what processes would benefit from being automated and where RPA will add the most value. Identify and choose an automation supplier that is agile and flexible, and that can evolve with you.

RPA lessons learned

Best practice advice for your own projects

Datagraphic's document automation experts, Glyn King and Karensa Maton, share their advice about lessons they learned first-hand from helping hundreds of organisations begin their automation journey.

Datagraphic's Group Managing Director, Glyn King, has worked in the payroll industry for over 25 years and witnessed first-hand how technology has developed the profession. Glyn often shares his knowledge about the use of automation technology in payroll at industry events.

Datagraphic's Head of Products, Karensa Maton, has worked with some of the UK's most prominent public and private organisations to help them with their digital transformation projects. Karensa fully understands the barriers which prevent automation success.

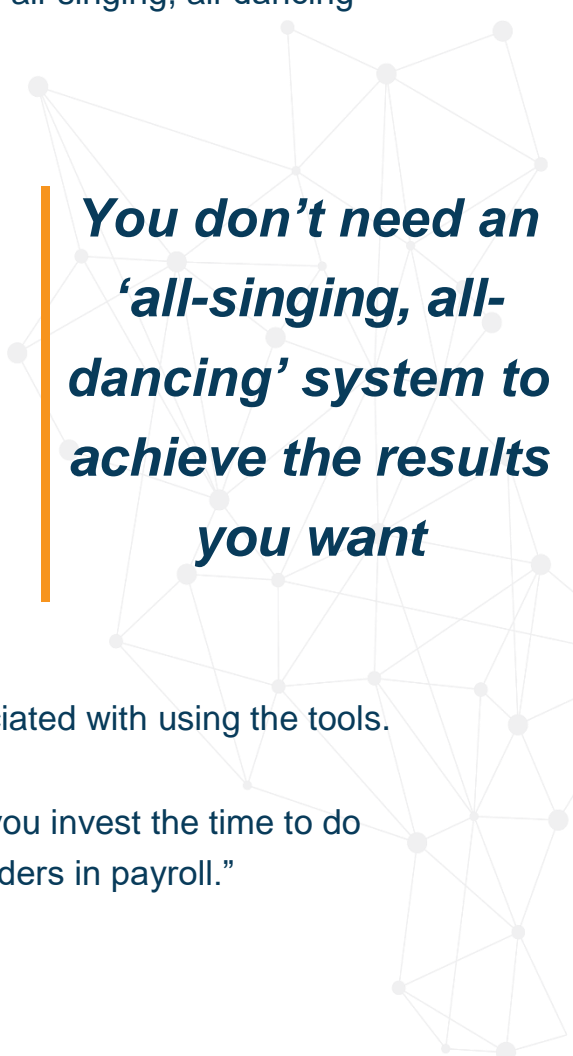# Lesson #1: Consider your business readiness

Glyn King: "When people start researching RPA and digital transformation for payroll, they are normally presented with highly sophisticated, best-in class systems that can promise endless opportunities.

Yet, in my experience, I've found you don't need an 'all-singing, all-dancing' system to achieve the results you want.

Consider your business readiness. And by that I mean look at your people, your data and your budget. If you don't have the resource or current infrastructure to support the system and all it promises, then why pay the big price tag that comes with it?"

You don't need an 'all-singing, all-dancing' system to achieve the results you want

Karensa Maton: "I agree. We've seen on many occasions clients turn to us because the system they thought offered the automation tools they needed, either can't work with existing systems within the business, or there are hidden costs associated with using the tools.

There is so much choice now. I highly recommend you invest the time to do your research on Robotic Process Automation providers in payroll."

Lesson #2: Scalability is key

Karensa: "We all know the world of work can be turbulent, especially in recent times. Having the ability to scale your processes up and down when needed has never been so important."

Glyn: "For certain industries it's common to have fluctuations in staffing for seasonal and economic reasons. So, you'll want an automation solution that

doesn't have minimum or maximum users. Or a solution that charges licence fees per employee.

Karensa: "And it's not just fluctuations in staffing that scalability is important for. As your business grows you'll need automation tools that can adapt and grow with you as your business needs change.

Ask the providers of any automation solution you're considering whether they can provide the flexibility you need. This is important because many solutions can be rigid and you don't want to find yourself looking for a new solution because the one you have can no longer provide the service you need."
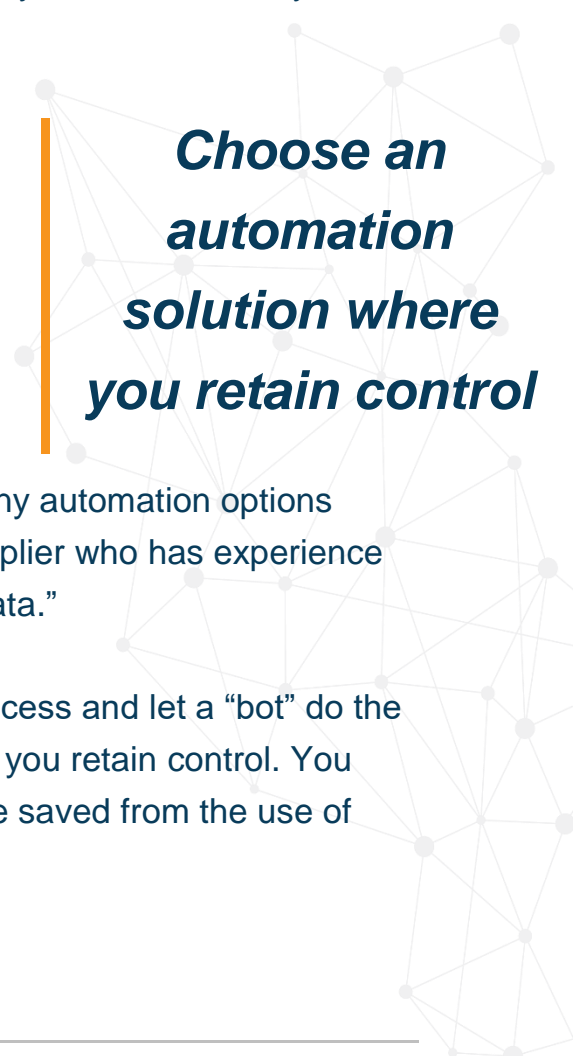
Lesson #3: Reduce the risk factor

Glyn: "One of the main aims for payroll is to reduce the risk factor. Payroll teams handle personal, financial and sensitive employee data on a daily basis.

Payroll is expected to pay people accurately, on time and in full compliance. You're also expected to quickly adjust and comply with new legislation. Any errors can create mistrust.

This is where using automation tools can help improve compliance and reduce 'human' error.

Choose an automation solution where you retain control

But, as Karensa mentioned before, there are so many automation options available, it's vital you use a proven and trusted supplier who has experience and the infrastructure in place to handle sensitive data."

Karensa: "It takes a lot of trust to just let go of a process and let a "bot" do the work for you. Choose an automation solution where you retain control. You also reduce the risk factor because some of the time saved from the use of

automation can be used on checking the final figures align with expectations, reducing the possibility of error."

Lesson #4: Think big, start small

Glyn: "Even though many of your payroll peers might be talking about using automation, few will actually be achieving automation success. It's important to remember using automation in payroll is still relatively new, and many of you will be at the start of your automation journey. My advice is to think big, but start small."

Karensa: "Most organisations aren't able to just switch everything to "digital" or to automate everything at once. It's a gradual process. I've seen that the most successful projects are those that start with automating one process first, testing and tweaking it, before building up and adding other processes."

Glyn: "The best thing is to start with a task or process that you really understand. For example, many payroll teams I've worked with in the past begin by automating the delivery of payroll documents. A time-consuming task that now only takes them minutes to do. They started with one document type to begin with – payslips – then started automating the delivery of other types of documents such as P60s, P45s, and reward statements."

RPA success story for Sodexo

Sodexo, a facilities management organisation, needed a more manageable and cost-effective way to deliver pay documents to a large and disperse workforce.

By implementing automation tools to securely deliver a variety of pay documents (payslips, P60s, P45s), online and in print, the payroll team saved time and money. They no longer manually distributed payslips, and employee queries about lost payslips were reduced dramatically.

As a result of using automation tools, the payroll team achieved:
- Rapid return-on-investment and £160,000 annual saving
- Zero hours integration from SAP software: leading to fast implementation
- Automated multi-channel delivery of payroll documents to all employees

The future of automation in payroll

Enhancing the payroll function for the future

The role of payroll looks set to become more 'human' than ever before. Payroll teams will be there to provide insight, to engage and inform co-workers. Whilst technology like RPA will take care of the repetitive and administrative tasks that take up their workloads today.

Payroll has always had to be one of the most flexible departments when it comes to adapting to change. As a profession, you're regularly challenged to understand and implement new legislation within deadlines and to present it in meaningful ways to employees and business stakeholders. The analytical and communication skills used in this process are – and will continue to be – valuable, providing a 'human' touch in a world of increasing automation and robotics.

So as more payroll teams see the value of RPA, it's likely we'll see a shift in the role payroll plays within an organisation in the future, but also a change in attitudes towards payroll being a vital function that can offer strategic insight.

And as we enter a new decade of innovation and technology progression, we will start to see more powerful, intuitive and complex technologies leading to more game-changing solutions that will improve the way we work even more. For the payroll profession to evolve and to deliver a more 'human' employee experience, the use of technology and automation tools is essential to free time and mind-space from operational tasks in 2021 and beyond.

Robotic Process Automation doesn't mean you have to change the way you operate entirely. Think big but start small. What processes would benefit from being automated? Where will it add value? What are your pain points? Pilot small automation projects first and then build on them and implement on a

wider-scale. For example, consider the documents you send to employees such as payslips, P60s, P45s and reward statements. Delivering this information to your workforce can be a very manual process that takes up so much of your time. But RPA technology can easily automate this.

Payroll need to upskill and look at software skills such as communication skills, listening and empathy. You need excellent communications skills so that employees have a better understanding and knowledge.

Speed is essential. If digital technology carries on advancing at this pace, organisations – regardless of industry, job function or size – will have to apply automation technologies throughout.

The sooner you begin automating payroll processes, the sooner you'll start reaping the benefits, which will only build over a longer period of time.

With greater access to information, payroll teams now have the capability to analyse information and identify real-time trends and patterns, allowing them to make recommendations for improvement. Payroll data has a larger role to play within organisations, empowered and enhanced by technology.

RPA success story for Butcher's Pet Care

Butcher's Pet Care, needed a more efficient way of delivering payslips. They needed a solution that saved them time, whilst also improving the employee experience.

Working with their existing payroll software, the automation tools allowed the payroll team to simply transfer the payroll data and digitally deliver payslips in just a few minutes, for employees to access immediately.

As a result of using automation tools, the payroll team achieved:

- Almost one day per month saved on administration time: payslip process and delivery now only takes a few minutes
- Less queries into the payroll team for re-issuing payslips
- The opportunity to add other payroll documents to their online portal (P60s, P11Ds, P45s), at their own pace.

Next steps

Kickstart your automation project

Now you understand what RPA is and how you can benefit from implementing automation technology, you might be thinking, *"where do I start?!"*

As mentioned previously, you're more likely to achieve automation success by piloting smaller projects first, learning from them and then building on them with the view to implement on a wider-scale.

Begin your journey by assessing your payroll processes and understanding which ones will benefit from being automated. For example, you could look to automate the processing and delivery of payslips. This task can take your team hours if not days every month to handle. But with automation tools, this could be reduced to just a few minutes.

It's likely you'll **need buy-in from other departments** across the business including, the C-suite. To gain their support you need to show how the time saved from automating manual processes will give you the ability to focus on work that provides more strategic value. For example, analysing and reporting payroll data.

Assess automation opportunities

Think employee experience

Build a business case

Identify your automation partner(s)

Test and evaluate

Evolve and scale

Remember, you don't have to travel this RPA journey alone. **Identify and choose an automation vendor that is agile and flexible**, and that can evolve with you.

Then finally, **test what works for you and your organisation**. RPA is flexible, scalable and can be easily adapted to suit your needs. Analyse the areas that achieve the most success and then **evolve and extend** these across other tasks and functions within payroll.

So, are you ready to start your Robotic Process Automation journey?
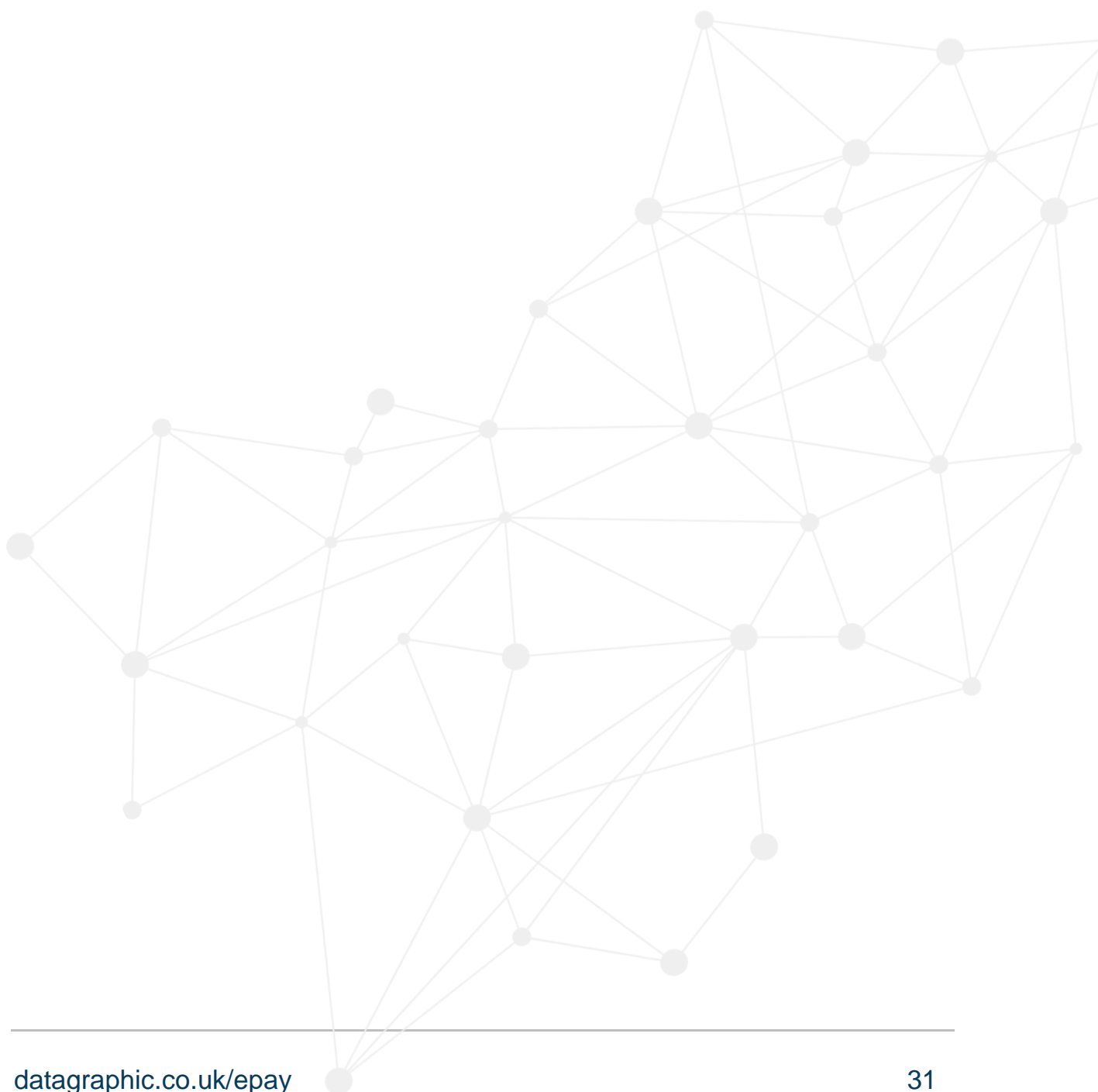
Learn more

If you're looking to automate the production and distribution of employee communications, then our automation experts are here to help.

Get in touch to see how you can use automation tools to reduce the time you spend on manual and repetitive document tasks by up to 98%.

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E: ask@datagraphic.co.uk

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