Having an Automation-First Mindset

Successful automation is about more than technology. Phil Calzadilla, vice president of sales for state, local and education (SLED) at UiPath, describes the platform, people and processes that create a path to workforce adoption and help organizations realize the full potential of automation.

How is robotic process automation—RPA—different from other forms of automation?

RPA is a type of automation that emulates human behavior. At the core of RPA are digital workers that can see, think, and do based on business rules. The biggest difference is RPA can be governed and is highly secure, fast, reliable and delivered at a very low cost. RPA is one part of automation, which includes everything from discovery and building automations to managing, running and engaging with them. Automation is a much bigger picture that involves technologies like AI, ML and document understanding and should be delivered in a platform that includes process discovery, analytics, testing and other applications that enable the people, governance and processes required for success.

What opportunities and challenges are driving the adoption of automation in state and local government?

Digital government and modernization are top priorities for CIOs. Couple that with the fact that their organizations usually have a great deal of technical debt [including aging infrastructure and older applications], which requires a lot of time and money to address, and you have a perfect storm for automation.

One of the beauties of automation is it's a much faster, lower-cost path to modernization and digital government because organizations don't have to do a forklift upgrade of their legacy systems. A big part of modernization is automation coupled with optimization, and none of that can be achieved without documentation. A healthy byproduct of RPA implementation is documentation that would otherwise be painstakingly difficult to get. Automation also helps address the ongoing challenge of workforce shortages and recruitment by offloading less desirable parts of the job—the mundane, repetitive tasks—so people have more time for more meaningful and impactful work.

Where can automation make the most impact?

We see many opportunities in benefits and eligibility, or whenever there is a backlog in citizen servicing, documents processing or interconnectivity between applications. Our top use cases are in unemployment insurance benefits, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or motor vehicle licenses and renewals, which have some or all of those components. For example, it's a much more rewarding job when instead of dealing with a mountain of paperwork, a social worker can focus on their mission and help an individual get healthcare benefits or help a parent get food or other assistance for their child.

How can organizations get the most out of automation?

Organizations need an automaton-first mindset with a focus on their citizen-centric mission. Doing so requires an automation operating model—a detailed picture of roles and responsibilities, governance and management—and a center of excellence that implements automations based on ROI, impact to the mission or whatever value aligns to the particular agency. Our most successful clients focus on high-value repetitive processes and develop their customized methodology for automation.

How can organizations prepare employees for automation?

Some executives don't realize how much repetitive work their teams do until we talk to their staff and then show them the power of the possible. The best ideas for automation come from the people doing the work, so simple education is the best way to prepare employees. We partner with organizations to help educate their end users and show them what's possible. It's also helpful to use terms like "digital employee" or "digital workforce" rather than the term "bot," which isn't always well received. People understand they can have a digital assistant right on their desktop. Adoption is important because state and local governments need digital workers to address their current and future workforce needs, just like the private sector.

Where should organizations start on the path to automation?

It's about the platform. It's not about automating one task but about looking at your automation platform and having an automation-first mentality, where you use the platform to help discover what to automate and then help clients implement those automations. To get started, talk to end users and find the biggest business- or mission-impacting issues. Find out how much of their work is repetitive, and then use the platform to enable and support automation in those areas.

Learn more at **Carah.io/GT-Oct-2022-UiPath**

Let people do people work. Automate the rest.