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Intelligent Automation for Post Pandemic Business Growth



Over the last year, both businesses and individuals have realized that returning to “normal” post-pandemic would not be quite as simple as just reverting to our old ways. The pandemic opened up a new way of business and therefore, returning to normal comes with challenges but also presents an opportunity to improve. Intelligent automation (IA) spiked in popularity during the pandemic and will likely not go anywhere, as many businesses are adopting this tool to help with post-pandemic business growth.

The global pandemic brought to light many issues, and concurrently created a sense of urgency for both professionals and businesses to accelerate their hike towards the future of work. The main catalyst was the disruption to the “business as usual” situation and the gaps this exposed. These were seen when human resources and existing processes could not scale to meet increasing demands or work pressures due to the unavailability of the workforce presented by the pandemic. Businesses clearly understood that automation was a viable solution to perform urgent jobs at scale and maintain business continuity.

The growth of IA

Significant IA investments are on the table. According to HFS and KPMG research, more than 30% of enterprises surveyed are already investing more than \$50M in IA technologies. Other studies have highlighted the fact that automation will play a critical role in helping businesses recover from the COVID-19-led economic

downturn. As a result, it is no surprise to see organizations accelerating their digital transformation efforts and investing more in IA.

Automation has become a vital asset and a key innovative solution for businesses that are looking to develop new ways of working. Here are five ways AI is helping businesses build resilience and agility to overcome post-pandemic slowdown.

1. Intelligent automation for meeting increased demand and urgent needs

The pandemic presented an unprecedented need for speed and scale in addressing customer queries despite the capabilities of limited human staff. Businesses of all sizes and domains found that automating routine tasks allowed them to meet demand quickly and better serve customers by catering to only critical cases that required human involvement.

This was apparent in the grocery and food delivery industry. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, it witnessed an upsurge in demand and IA helped them keep up with a huge customer support rush. Similarly, sectors like healthcare, insurance, and banking found themselves plagued with a larger than usual backlog of paperwork. Automation helped them sort through semi-structured or unstructured data and remove existing limitations on data extraction from documents. With employees working from home and facing restricted movement, IA was a critical tool to help streamline the entire process seamlessly.

Without automation, these businesses could not have achieved the speed and scale required to maintain their relationships with their customers. However, with the efficiency and savings achieved, businesses across domains are realizing that “digital-first” is not a long-term goal anymore; rather, it’s essential for survival in the post-pandemic world.

2. Intelligent automation is both for short-term and long-term growth post-pandemic

IA has the potential to add value to business processes and workflows, supplement employee capabilities and harness the power of man and machine to improve customer experiences and service.

IA’s benefits extend both short term and long term. At the onset of the pandemic, many organizations opted for immediate and short-term benefits, however, it is suggested that organizations should opt for a dual-pronged strategy for IA. Immediate, short-term benefits can be reaped by going after the “low-hanging fruit” of process automation, while at the same time thinking longer-term to deliver bigger and more transformative changes.

Starting small can help organizations realize results quickly, making it easier to get a project off the ground affordably, and from there, enterprises can build big towards a long-term vision, having delivered quick wins along the way.

3. Helps organizations get ready for a lean and flat organizational structure

Many companies are taking a fresh look at their organizational structure in light of recent technology investments and the impact of the pandemic on staff. Accordingly, they should make changes in the roles and responsibilities of the existing workforce and hiring plans for newly evolved roles.

Also, consider implementing learning and development programs for existing workforces to make them empowered and comfortable with the new automation solutions implemented in the organization. View IA technology as an opportunity to improve workforce skillsets and build innovative work teams for future-proof success. With a leaner and flatter structure, employees react to changes rapidly and start focusing on other tasks that require strategic thinking, and spend less time on manual and repetitive tasks.

Understand that appropriate skill development opportunities, along with an advanced work from home program, can lead to a better employee experience and overall higher growth.

4. Drive innovation with newly developed roles and skill-sets

Businesses are investing in IA to ensure business continuity, drive process resilience, eliminate the risk of human error, fill in for missing human labor and create scale. As all these changes happen, management must support new and emerging job roles and newly evolved subject matter experts.

Future-fit managers will leverage automation to create effective cross-functional teams including members from IT, operations, data science, and other departments to drive growth and innovation holistically.

5. Re-imagine business processes post-pandemic

Amid the impact of a global outbreak of COVID-19, businesses can use IA to reimagine their business processes and operational models altogether, thereby finding new ways to measure and deliver real-time value.

Start with reviewing your automation strategy and roadmap proactively. A prudent approach will be to prioritize automation in the areas that use repetitive processes, require operational cost reduction, bring in efficiency in work from home environments, offers supply chain resilience, and more.

Automation tools can create connections across organizations, enabling a holistic view of the processes and customer journey to deliver personalized value in real-time.

6. Take automation anxiety among employees seriously.

Businesses have to recognize that automation and the pandemic have certainly altered the way we work and thus there are chances that it may lead to new forms of digital anxiety. For instance, employees are happy and satisfied at work if they are

making progress in their work and saving time. However, if the automation initiative does not deliver the results expected, it may lead to anxiety.

Data supporting how automation is helping individuals and organizations will help them trust automation processes and can lead to lower levels of stress.

Unfortunately, there is no accurate method for measurement of the stress level of workers. Performance metrics used in current times leave organizations uninformed of how advancing automation is impacting employees. Investigate identification and treatment options that deal with the machine and work stress issues.

Businesses will need to invest in the right technologies to speed up recovery. IA should be high on that list and it will become a boardroom-driven strategy, requiring buy-in from business and IT teams together. Automation technologies, partnered with human counterparts, can help businesses become more human and deliver greater value to customers post-pandemic.

About the Author:

Arindam Ray Chaudhuri, COO at AgreeYa Solutions, has over 25 years of rich industry experience in the technology domain. He has greatly contributed to AgreeYa's software, solutions, and services portfolio, by integrating a global team, defining the technology and business vision of products and services, establishing large-scale client engagement, and leading time, cost, and quality-driven value via project governance and solution engineering.