

Black & Veatch leverages robotic process automation to streamline operations

RPA solution means high-value employees focus on more productive work rather than manual tasks

Building around the world

Headquartered in Overland Park, Kansas, Black & Veatch is an employee-owned engineering, procurement, consulting, and construction company with a 100-year legacy of creating a better world for today and for generations to come. The company has more than 10,000 employees in 50 countries around the world, supporting a wide variety of infrastructure projects. It helps clients turn vision into reality.

Exploring automation possibilities

Black & Veatch wanted to explore new ways to lower operational costs. The IT team proposed deploying robotic process automation (RPA) to handle certain business functions and create efficiencies in day-to-day tasks.

RPA has applications in both the front and back office. Front-office functions typically generate revenue, while back-office work is revenue enabling, such as HR, finance, legal, and accounting. Black & Veatch employs a large number of knowledge workers, mostly engineers. The goal was to identify mundane and repetitive tasks that could be automated through RPA so this skilled workforce could focus on higher-value work.

Led by Devendra Kumar, Director, Enterprise Technologies Implementation, Black & Veatch decided to create an RPA Center of Excellence and run a pilot project to determine if the technology would work for its business.



Our CIO is very eager to explore RPA possibilities and she has challenged us to go from six projects to 60 this year. That is a 10-fold increase, but our business leaders are seeing the potential that RPA brings to the business and they are excited."

Devendra Kumar
Director, Enterprise
Technologies Implementation
Black & Veatch

Assessing the RPA process

Black & Veatch selected the UiPath Enterprise RPA Platform, and chose to work with longstanding partner Capgemini because of their existing relationship and Capgemini's Eliminate, Standardize, Optimize, Automate, Robotize (ESOAR) framework.

"The ESOAR framework was an important piece of the process, because it is simple to understand and helps you evaluate all of the pre-work that needs to be completed before you choose the right RPA project," says Kumar.

Any new technology at Black & Veatch needs to be scalable so it can be validated for global use. For Kumar's team, the process depended on establishing a model that could be used across the company. It set up a process to identify potential opportunities via the internal RPA Center of Excellence (CoE) and apply a standard checklist to each option.

The RPA CoE evaluates projects to see if they will reduce the cost of operations, eliminate a backlog of pending processes, reduce cycle time, or eliminate errors. If the team decides that RPA is the right application, the project proceeds. Not every project gets approved.

"The automation should be describable in simple words and we should be able to replicate those processes predictably," says Kumar. "In some cases, the cost of automation could be more than the actual value received from the project. This is why you need an existing process to evaluate every request and make sure it will deliver savings."

Reaping the benefits of RPA

Black & Veatch is already seeing how RPA can help streamline operations. RPA projects have been used to clear a backlog of 20,000 transactions in a couple of months. To date, the RPA return on investment ranges from \$50,000 to \$250,000 per project in annual savings.

Kumar's advice to others exploring RPA is to start with a small pilot soon after completing some research, and make sure the pilot is successful. If the first project does not go well, then interest will diminish in the second.

"Even if it means taking a little longer, investing a little more, or doing more homework, the first project needs to work, or no one will want to do a second project. The technology itself is fairly simple but you need to ensure there is business continuity after a process is automated," says Kumar. "It is important to get the right candidate for the first automation, so you can show the success and the value realized."

Based on the achievements of the initial RPA projects, Black & Veatch is moving forward with additional projects across the different lines of business.

Technology solutions

UiPath Enterprise RPA Platform
Capgemini ESOAR framework

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