

Globant ▶

Digital businesses
look to smart
**robotic process
automation**

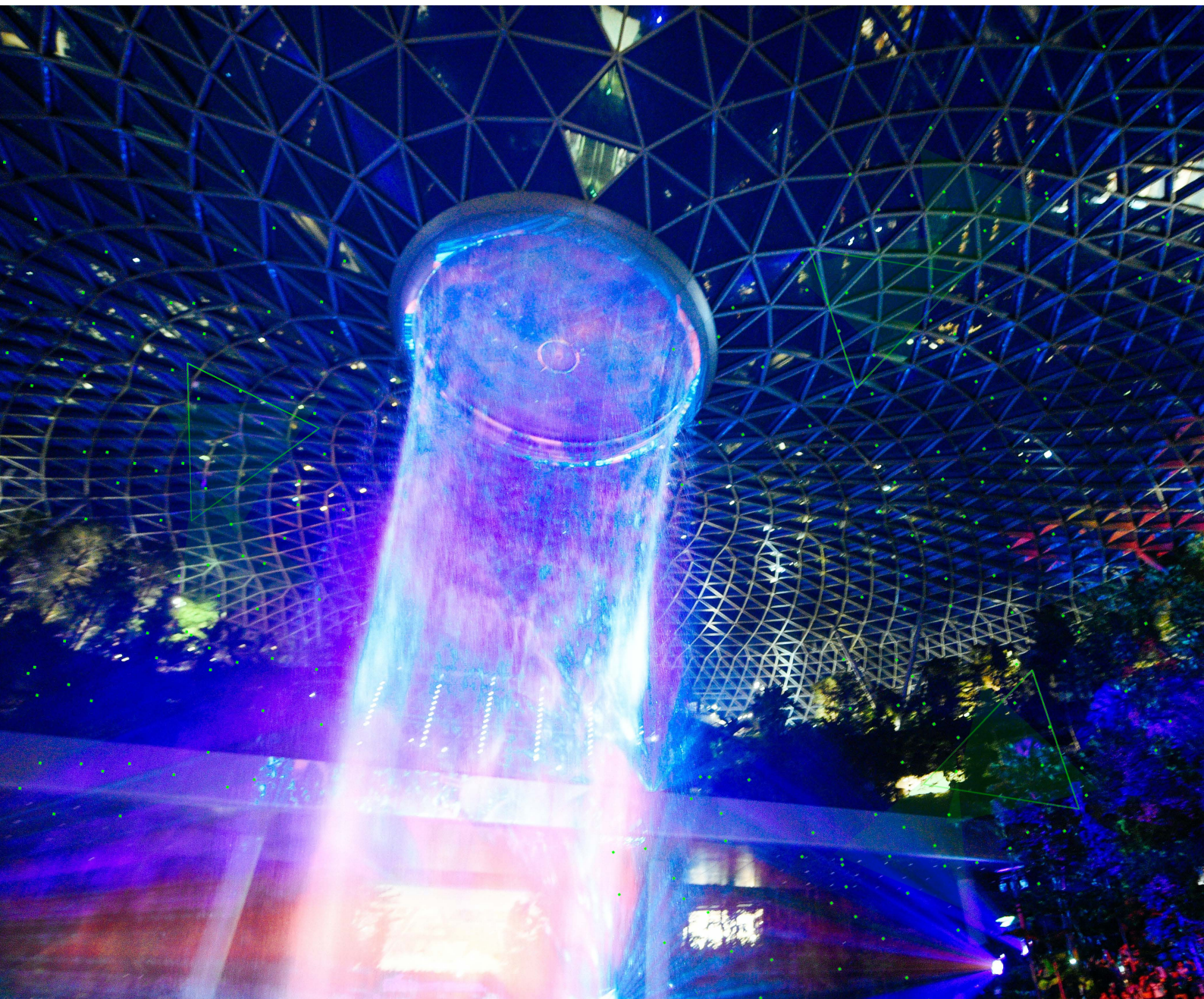
The evolution of robotic process automation continues apace with businesses looking to intelligent automation

RPA has become highly attractive to businesses as it enables them to automate tasks in the front, middle, and back office, increase employee efficiency and lower costs. They can automate these tasks without having to code APIs, thus making it easier for business leaders to implement. It has become one of the fastest growing areas of enterprise investment in recent years. According to **Gartner**, even with the economic pressures resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the RPA market is expected to grow at double-digit rates through 2024.

RPA is highly attractive because typically it has been hard (and time-consuming) for

organizations to mesh together different systems - put simply, RPA makes this much easier. As a result, we're seeing businesses use the technology in more and more different use cases - and no longer just in the traditional example of stable situations, requiring repetitive manual work.

In deploying RPA most organizations have looked to key RPA vendors, such as Blue Prism and UiPath. Those organizations with more capabilities have also looked to develop their own RPA solutions - this can be attractive due to the costs of working with a vendor, particularly if you aim to scale usage.



RPA governance is **key to success**

Many companies overlook governance as a critical aspect in their strategy. Indeed, some organizations take the approach of assuming that the technology will run on its own. In reality, for you to have any chance of success, bots need constant management and maintenance. Bots often break. As [one commentator wrote](#) about the fragility of bots, “most bots are as “high-maintenance” as a Hollywood star”.

RPA governance needs to include everything from bot policies, strategy, security, to standards and metrics. Meanwhile, in order to maintain operational functionality, your team needs to constantly monitor your bots.

A further challenge can be that businesses want to open up bot creation more broadly within their organization due to the ease for business users to handle RPA. This can potentially lead to a “wild west”. To avoid this, it’s important to have governance controls and security

processes. Most likely, this will take the shape of having a central team that manages all bots. However, technology can also help here - some organizations have put in place a bot that evaluates the performance of their bots. Without this, issues may go for weeks before anyone notices. It’s important to ensure the processes are in place, just as you would for other mission-critical business processes.

Security is a further key element of governance. Businesses face a complex and changing threat environment. Bots introduce a new area of security risk for organizations. However, at the same time organizations can use RPA to improve their security, and can help reduce vulnerabilities. Automation in particular can help organizations introduce a zero touch environment, significantly reducing possible risks. Meanwhile, if a bot is transferring data between different corporate systems, make sure its actions are traceable (and distinguishable from other users).



Artificial intelligence helps make RPA more sophisticated

What has started to enable RPA to become more than just a basic bot able to do basic tasks, is artificial intelligence. By combining AI and machine learning with RPA, you can turn a basic bot into something that can now understand natural language, or that can learn from mistakes. It is able to decide upon a course of action based on analyzing and interpreting data - and then learns from the decision.

As a result, in 2020 companies are taking RPA to a new level. Increasingly they are moving to smart process automation (SPA) or “intelligent automation”, which is an evolutionary progression of RPA. SPA involves integrating machine learning with RPA and cognitive computing - thus RPA is no longer just the automation of standard tasks. The research group Everest [defines smart RPA](#) as “solutions that combine RPA and AI technologies to automate business processes”.

In much the same way as chatbots have increasing sophistication and can be trained based on the activities of humans that they are deployed alongside, so RPA learns from the humans it acts

alongside with.

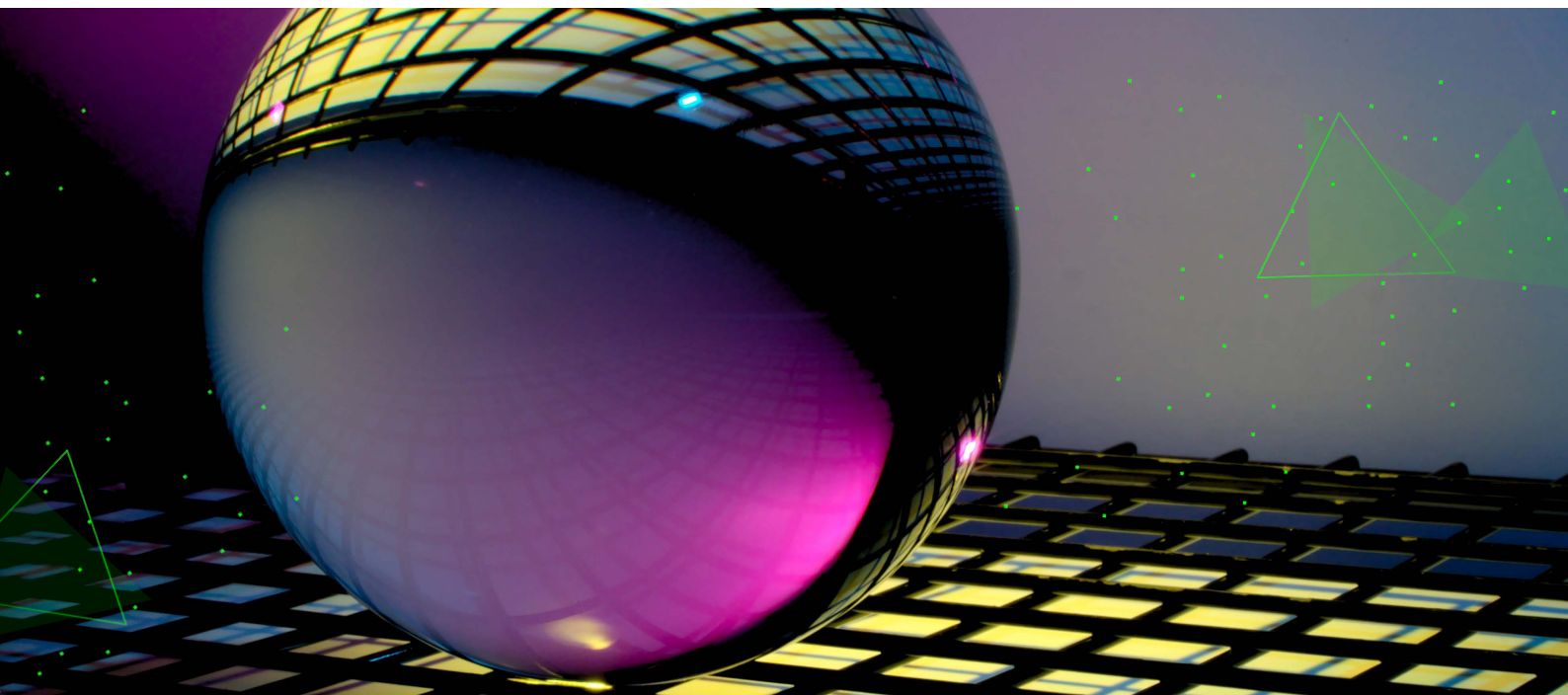
We can imagine a spectrum of complexity for bots:

●●● **Bots 1.0.** These are ideal for mature processes with little change. This is what characterized “RPA 1.0”. We can think of the manual, copy and paste type tasks that RPA has helped eliminate, and free up employees from this very menial, labor-intensive work. Such bots work with structured data.

●●● **Artificial intelligence fused bots.** Such bots are situation-dependent, and can handle complex situations. They deal with a lot of unstructured data.

The research company, Celent, [describes this shift](#) as the move from “task” and “meta” robots, to “IQ” and “AI robots”.

However, it is not just RPA bots that are becoming more sophisticated. Instead we’re seeing a broader shift towards intelligent automation. This is where this report now turns.



The move towards **intelligent automation** across the enterprise

Forrester Research, in their 2019 report evaluating the leading RPA vendors, states that over the past year, “RPA software suites have embraced the practical components of AI to become intelligent process automation platforms”. Adopting RPA is often the first step for enterprises in their adoption of automation and AI - indeed, RPA typically provides both the motivation, and the means, to kick-start an enterprises’ AI journey.

While many organizations have sought to automate operations for many years, intelligent automation presents new opportunities to create new experiences. This is becoming

what it means to be a “digital organization” - bringing together various technologies, using automation, to build powerful experiences for every stakeholder of the enterprise, whether a customer or employee.

We believe we are currently in the very early stages of seeing the potential of intelligent automation platforms. Over the next few years we will see a rapid advancement in their sophistication, with organizations starting to use automation in more wider and more complex areas of their business. And as the sophistication of these automation platforms increases, so it will spur ever more deployments.

The importance of service providers to achieve success with **RPA and intelligent automation**

While the initial deployment may not appear overly complex, this can be deceptive. Working with partners can help organizations with implementation, as well as ongoing support and maintenance. And of course, prior to deciding on using RPA and intelligent automation, and the strategy you want to use, service providers can provide crucial consulting services. In examining the RPA services market, Forrester found that many [businesses struggle with their RPA initiatives](#) - in particular with regard to “challenges

around business case development, governance, organizational alignment, and the lack of a cultural framework for managing automation”.

Reflective of this, most companies have still not been able to scale their RPA initiatives. According to a [2019 survey by Deloitte](#), although the number of organizations with more than 51 deployments doubled from 2018 to 2019, it remains that just 8% of companies are operating RPA at scale.

Overcoming the core **challenge to smart RPA**

The number one challenge facing businesses in their RPA journey is the tendency to automate a business process as it currently is. Doing this means businesses are seeking to make their current way of working more efficient. However, they are forgetting to review and transform the process for the digital world.

We recommend that businesses first evaluate the process, and look to re-imagine it - and during this transition see how they can implement smart RPA or the potential benefits that smart RPA could provide. As the analysts at Horses for Sources have thus pointed out, many RPA deployments are “focused on the sub-process (“granular”), rather than being enterprise-wide (“holistic”).

CONCLUSION

RPA and intelligent automation offer an increasingly powerful weapon for businesses, but challenges abound

We are currently witnessing the rapid maturation of RPA technologies, and the move towards broader intelligent automation platforms. This presents businesses with real options to transform not just specific processes, but ultimately the core of their business model. Despite the apparent ease of initial RPA implementations, this masks broader complexity surrounding implementation and governance. Service providers are well positioned to help organizations in their intelligent automation journey.

About **Globant**

We are a digitally native company where innovation, design and engineering meet scale. We use the latest technologies in the digital and cognitive field to transform organizations in every aspect.

- We have more than 14,300 employees and we are present in 16 countries working for companies like Google, Rockwell Automation, Electronic Arts and Santander, among others.
- We were named a Worldwide Leader in CX Improvement Services by IDC MarketScape report.
- We were also featured as a business case study at Harvard, MIT, and Stanford.
- We are a member of the Cybersecurity Tech Accord.

For more information, visit

www.globant.com

Globant 