Robotic Process Automation takes off with Agile capability uplift

CASE STUDY

With a newly formed Robotic Process Automation (RPA) team looking to deliver rapid value, a major airline brought in Assurity Consulting to help accelerate the move towards an Agile and Scrum approach to delivery. Over the course of a two-month capability uplift, the airline's RPA team has seen a staggering increase in productivity and responsiveness, delivering results to the business up to 300 percent faster, building confidence and achieving rapid time to value from automation investments.

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Situation

A new executive appointed to lead the airline's RPA team sought a move away from the waterfall approach to Agile and Scrum delivery. This was deemed necessary for the RPA team so it could deliver rapidly and build confidence in the concept and capability in the business.

Moreover, the automations enabled by RPA can be transient, which became pointedly obvious during the COVID-19 crisis. Given the nature of its business, this airline like others was seriously affected, and at short notice had to roll out extensive processes for refunds, rebooking and other remedial action.

And, like other organisations seeking digital transformations and automation advantages, the airline had sought a suitable tool for several years, with an understanding that in the quest for getting more done with the same or reduced effort, RPA has much to offer. This is particularly the case with RPA, which presents an opportunity to relieve people of repetitive, time consuming tasks.

By creating a Centre of Excellence, the intention was to equip the RPA team to provide an enormous range of automations across the business, whether in front office environments such as the contact centre, booking channels, refunds and more, through to the back office internal processes around human resource or maintenance management.

However, this could only be achieved by establishing a high-performance team with confidence in itself – and which enjoys the confidence of the business.

With the existing waterfall delivery method, creating successful automations was taking too long, spending up to six months for minor solutions.

Furthermore, with team members working in relative isolation, continuity was a challenge – if someone was on leave, work stopped. If an automation glitched, pinpointing it was difficult. This meant the 'internal customer' experience was poor, and stakeholders disillusioned by automations which were not fit for purpose or sufficiently reliable.

Solution

Understanding that the issue was not with the RPA software but instead with the challenges of building a cohesive team and improved delivery methodology, the airline set about establishing a team of suitably aligned personnel. It also brought in Assurity Consulting for a capability uplift on Agile and DevOps.

This was necessary for a team comprised of members with differing experience levels on Agile and Scrum, and little experience with automation. They put Assurity Consulting in charge of the capability uplift , while the airline focused its own resources on bringing the team up to speed on RPA.

Assurity focused on resetting the team's working practices through a three-day kickstart training exercise establishing baseline understanding and rationale for Agile practices. This was followed with establishment of a vision and purpose for the RPA team, achieving common understanding of how the team contributes to the overall success of the airline.

Additional work saw the creation of a charter setting out and embedding the Agile working rhythm and interpersonal expectations of the team around key Agile events (sprint planning, sprint review, sprint retrospective and sprint refinement).

The engagement was capped by Product Ownership training and Agile Value Management training. Across the two months of the engagement, Assurity consultants provided coaching and support dealing with issues and challenges as they arose.
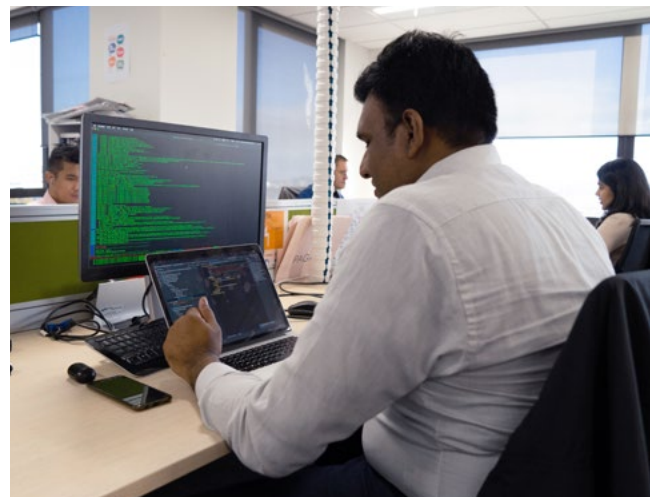
Results

The clearest indicator of the successful capability uplift to Agile is seen in the time taken for the delivery of automations. From months, development time has contracted down to 2 weeks for small processes. More complex ones can take up to 6 weeks, with an overall time to value reduction of 80 percent.

By moving to a shared development cycle with considerable role overlap and 'bite-sized' continuous delivery, there is continuity across multiple lines of work. There are no gaps in delivery, with single-person dependency for any given automation eliminated.

Because the RPA team has moved towards high performance – and given it has rapidly delivered automations which have helped the airline navigate the COVID crisis – today it is becoming a trusted partner to the business.

This is clear when areas in the airline need help fast. The RPA team, confident in its ability to deliver, steps up every time, leveraging new-found skills in Agile and DevOps for the rapid creation of successful and reliable automations that process work fast.

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At a glance

Company: Major airline	**Industry:** Transport

Requirements:

The airline has a newly formed Robotic Process Automation (RPA) team and are keen to move away from the traditional waterfall approach to Agile and Scrum delivery. With the existing waterfall delivery method, creating successful automations was taking too long, spending up to six months for minor solutions and are highly dependent on individuals where work would stop when the staff member is on leave or out of the office.

The goal is to enable the RPA team to deliver rapid value and build confidence in the ability of the RPA team to deliver successful and reliable automations to the organisation. Assurity Consulting was engaged to help with the capability uplift of the RPA team and accelerate the move towards an Agile and Scrum approach to delivery.

Approach and services:

As the RPA team comprised of members with differing experience levels on Agile and Scrum, and little experience with automation, Assurity worked with this airline over a period of two months on:

- Resetting the team's working practices through a three-day kickstart training exercise establishing baseline understanding and rationale for Agile practices
- Establishment of a vision and purpose for the RPA team
- Achieving common understanding of how the team contributes to the overall success of the airline
- Creation of a charter setting out and embedding the Agile working rhythm and interpersonal expectations of the team around key Agile events (sprint planning, sprint review, sprint retrospective and sprint refinement)
- Conducting Product Ownership training and Agile Value Management training
- Providing coaching and support dealing with issues and challenges as they arose

Outcomes achieved:

The RPA team is now regarded as a trusted partner to the business and is confident in its ability to deliver by leveraging new-found skills in Agile and DevOps. Key outcomes achieved include:

- Increased in productivity and responsiveness, delivering results to the business up to 300 percent faster
- Reduced development time from months to 2 weeks for small processes and 6 weeks for more complex processes
- Reduced overall time to value by 80 percent
- Eliminated gaps in delivery and single-person dependency
- Established continuity of delivery across multiple lines of work