



The GSA Automation User Group - Leeds

The GSA's Automation User Group held its inaugural meeting in Leeds on Thursday 31 March. Attendees included representatives from ISG, Ofsure, Cognizant, IBM, NHS Business Service, Direct Line Group and the Irish Government among others.

Both NHS Business Services and Direct Line Group presented cases studies of automation in practice within their organisations, and shared their respective journeys. The key areas covered included recognising the need for automation, the different drivers and constraints surrounding each programme, identifying which processes could be impacted, the steps needed before automation could be considered practically (including building the business case), through to vendor selection, testing and implementation.

All the other participants also contributed with their own experiences and views in what was a highly engaging and informative 3hr session.

Learning outcomes

The outputs shared as learning outcomes were incredibly insightful. As this was a closed meeting not all of the details can be shared publicly, but some of the outcomes included -

- A broad Internal stakeholder management plan is critical right from the outset (there will often be a lack knowledge and available resources in pockets across the breadth of an organisation to drive the initiative forward). Anticipate that some key stakeholders will need to be educated on what automation involves.
- Engage your IT management early on, agree a joint governance approach and meet regularly to ensure compliance.
- Often only a fraction of processes (could be as little as 20% of what was first thought) go forwards to automation. Don't promise too much too early.
- Consider how your processes work/should work – don't just build robots for the sake of it!
- RPA isn't transformational alone. Be prepared for business process engineering as a step towards automation. Ensure stakeholder buy-in to this from the outset.
- Run a pilot as a learning opportunity. Some businesses ran multiple pilots as part of their supplier selection process.
- Business cases are often impacted by unforeseen 'blockers' (eg, processes will often have unstructured or cognitive components, detailed process maps may have gaps or no longer exist etc) - this must be factored in to timelines, budgets etc, where possible
- Remember that any kind of software updates impacting your services might also mean the robots must be reprogrammed. This needs to be understood and factored in where appropriate.

Who owns the Robots?

As well as buyer experience of a number of service providers being openly discussed, there was also meaningful debate around the following topics, which we will also carry forward into future User Group meetings –



- How do you contract for automation?
- How do you protect customer IP ownership?
- When to outsource automation versus doing it in-house?
- How do you prevent provider lock-in (who owns the robot?)
- How to run an RFP to find an automation provider

Tools and templates

As part of this User Group, an example RFP and Supplier Assessment Tool was shared with us and will be made available to all User Group members. The contact details of each User Group member will also be made available.

Another Leeds-based User Group has been scheduled for 7 September, contact the GSA to be a part of it. Future AUG meetings will also take place in Manchester (11 May), London (21 June) and Dublin (30 November). Other locations will be confirmed soon. Keep checking www.gsa-uk.com for details.

About the Automation User Group

The purpose of the [Automation User Group](#) is to examine Automation in practice through presentations and case studies provided by practitioners and end-users who have are in the process of, or have already deployed, Automation in any of its forms; from RPA and cognitive machine thinking to fully AI-supported processing.

Our aim is to create an industry-wide Centre of Excellence, which will be a repository for such presentations and case studies (good and bad), as well as tools and templates to help members on their automation journey, including RFP templates, assessment tools and Best Practice Guides. In doing so we hope to reach beyond the hype and the hyperbole, and provide an independent view of the benefits and challenges of one of the most disruptive technologies to impact sourcing in recent years. We will also establish and facilitate a collaborative community on the subject, that regularly meets in person and online to share knowledge and accelerates learning amongst its participants.

The Centre of Excellence will be driven and actively supported by the GSA's Member Council [Automation Wizards, New Technologies Leads and Digital Transformation Jedis](#) from leading and innovative brands such as Zurich, Thoughtonomy, Xoomworks, ProArch to name a few.