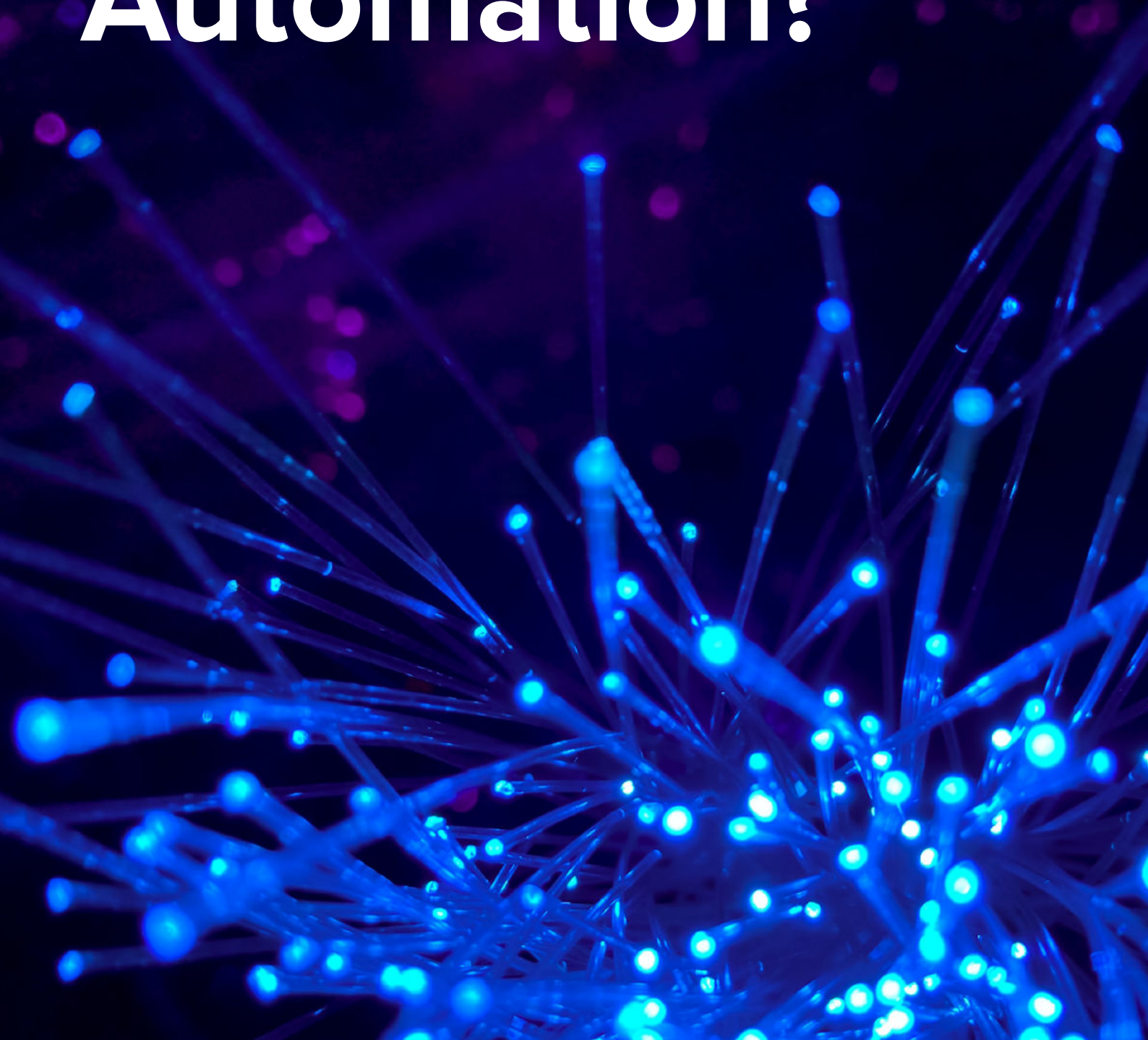


What is **Business Automation?**



Historically, businesses that adopt modern technology at the right time are the ones that thrive. The ones that lag behind are the ones that struggle once said technology becomes ubiquitous. An example of mature technology that is practically required for businesses to compete in the modern landscape is business automation.

One of the chief concerns for several businesses is productivity, and how to implement processes that increase efficiency and help the business run better. This is what business automation is all about, and in this article we'll be covering the basics - what it is, how it works, and when it's time to look into applying it to your business.



What is business automation?

Business automation is a way of using technology to perform repetitive or time-consuming tasks that can free up employees to take on more complicated, more valuable work. This will then drastically reduce the amount of time employees spend on menial tasks; time which is then redistributed into work that cannot be automated and can help improve business performance.

Business automation helps companies minimise costs and increases productivity and efficiency. If your company has experienced a period of post-pandemic growth and brought in more customers, becoming more efficient is a necessary part of sustainable growth. After all, the two ways to grow your business and increase profits are to gain more customers or to become more efficient.

Here's how business automation helps you achieve that.



How does business automation work?

There are certain activities that companies can spend an inordinate amount of manual time on: employee onboarding, product stock taking, bringing on new customers, emailing clients or generating reports. These are business processes that usually span multiple departments, and can involve a number of people throughout the company.

What business automation does is distil these activities into a workflow with steps and a starting action. Once that action is triggered, the steps that come after run automatically through software.



For example, if a company is onboarding a new employee, the process of onboarding that new employee - such as setting up their email and filling out any pertinent information - happens without any human input or interaction, freeing up the HR department to focus on issues that need a human element and cannot be automated.

A lot of companies use business process automation in one way or another, and as companies get bigger, business automation becomes an inevitable addition in order to keep the company running smoothly.



When is business automation applicable within a business?

Whenever an action or a task is repetitive, that process can likely be automated.

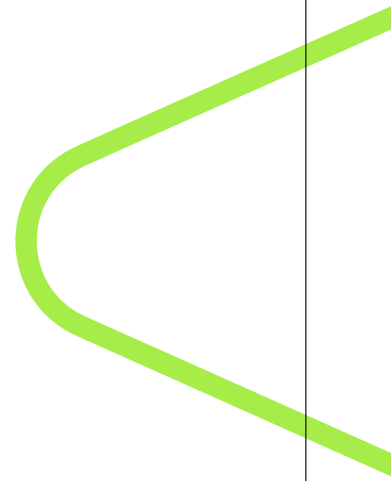
When we talk about business automation, we're talking about software that eliminates errors, helps different platforms integrate well, and creates better workflows. However, business automation can also be used for tasks with variable parameters - and in fact, should be used for tasks with variable parameters, as the risk of human error is much higher than if the task were to be automated.

Business process automation software can be developed to do anything from answer customer service questions to data collection. Additionally, automation software can also be used to integrate multiple different systems to work together, which can also in turn improve workflow and processes throughout the entire business.

Automation software can also be 'taught' to respond to certain queries in replacement of a customer service representative, or to act as an intermediary between a human agent and an AI chatbot.



What are the benefits of business automation?



Business automation can help speed up the process of work by routing the necessary information to the right person at the right time and setting tasks in motion without requiring human intervention. This also minimises the risk of errors and creates a more cost-efficient, streamlined way of working that will ultimately benefit your business.

The boost in productivity and morale across the organisation will directly benefit your employees with more time to do work that is intricate and interesting to them, and a greater sense of satisfaction in the work that requires human intervention. Furthermore, it is much easier to chart the progress of your company when reports are automated: this will give you a better insight into the successes and failures of your organisation, better compliance, and better auditing capabilities.

While not every process will benefit from automation, every organisation will likely find some process that should be better automated.



What's the link between business automation and business intelligence?

Business automation and business intelligence work well together, and can be inspired partially or fully by each other. If you consider business intelligence as the roadmap to a successful business, then business automation can be one of the tools that you use to achieve your goals.

While both tools are strong separately, using them together can offer unique insights into the way your company is run that will make it easier to answer and address high-level issues.



For example, when you use automation to integrate business tools, the data that is taken from these tools can be consolidated into a centralised data storage, or data warehouse, making it easier to analyse. That data can also highlight any areas that could use optimisation, either through changing the way you work or through additional software.

You can also have one without the other: business intelligence doesn't necessarily have to lead to automation, however the likelihood is that business automation can really help your company adapt to any changes that are happening, both internally and externally based on the insights that business intelligence software can provide.



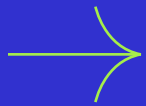
Is business automation expensive?

As with any software, there are varying price points for automation. Additionally, the complexity of automation will vary greatly, from a simple setup wizard to a custom web application that uses a lot of different services.

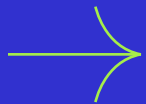
However, it should be said that the value provided by business automation will be affected by how well you future proof your business, how your company is growing, and what your ROI is. Once you have those facts in mind and an idea of what kind of automation you want to use, the decision whether or not to invest in software automation becomes a simpler one to make.

A lot of businesses lose money through inefficient processes and operations, something that automation software can not only identify, but streamline, which saves you money in the long run. **Bear in mind that you can approach it in a way that fits your budget, piece by piece. Here are a few examples:**

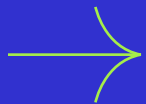




Due to complicated internal processes involving a large number of employees, businesses often end up not charging clients for services provided due to a lack of streamlined communication and a central system to refer to.



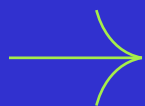
Adding a higher volume of employees to answer customer questions that could be made available automatically and more conveniently through automation, such as tracking information for a shipping company.



Manufacturing companies also suffer from needless overhead costs due to copy-paste errors when processing orders, which can be easily automated instead - eliminating human error.

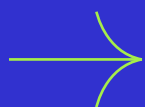


There are two types of automation that can be implemented quickly and efficiently, and might run cheaper than a custom solution.



LOW CODE AUTOMATION

The first is low-code automation. This is automation that requires little coding experience and can be delivered in the form of a tool, therefore reducing the need for writing vast quantities of code. Low-code automation will help smaller businesses digitise quickly and optimise business-critical operations, but might struggle to develop more intricate programs, as it mostly relies on drag and drop interfaces to build apps, which can be limited.



ROBOTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION

Another option is to invest in RPA - robotic process automation. These are software robots that can emulate human actions and interactions with digital systems, and can perform a range of actions such as extracting data and navigating internal systems.

Modern call centres frequently make use of RPA in order to deliver a much more efficient service to their end client - for example, if a customer is calling into the service centre with a particular issue, RPA can be used to consolidate all the information about that client and their issue on one screen, and can even isolate the right solution for the service desk to supply. RPA is also frequently used in industries such as healthcare and medicine, usually in scheduling appointments or fulfilling client claims.



Off-the-shelf automation software or a custom solution?

Automation software can be a costly investment for any business, but it doesn't need to be: there are several out-of-box tools that will work to automate your processes without much need for custom code, similar to many other software products available on the market.

Depending on what you need for your business, these out-of-box solutions can work just as well as custom software to address your needs, especially if you only have a few issues to address, such as automating your website to send a specific response to any queries.



For simple issues such as this, you don't necessarily need a software company to write you a custom solution that is tailored to this specific issue. Many organisations already have some out of the box automation software implemented into their systems.

While many scenarios can be solved by low-code or robotic process automation, others can require a lot more custom code, such as when integrating multiple systems that are not natively connected. You might also find that, as your company grows, out-of-the-box solutions might not necessarily have the nuance to address your company's particular needs, and so can be supplemented with different tools or custom code. For example if you've changed your inventory system and want to integrate it with a different invoicing software, then a custom solution could be your best bet to create a seamless connection between the two.



Get started with Business Automation

If you feel like your business can benefit from automation, but you don't know where to start or how to start, don't worry.

Contact us for a consultation with our business automation experts, no-strings-attached.

We'll listen, understand your business, and make suggestions as to where you can introduce automation and start building efficiency.

