

# RPA, Machine Learning and its Impacts on the Public Sector

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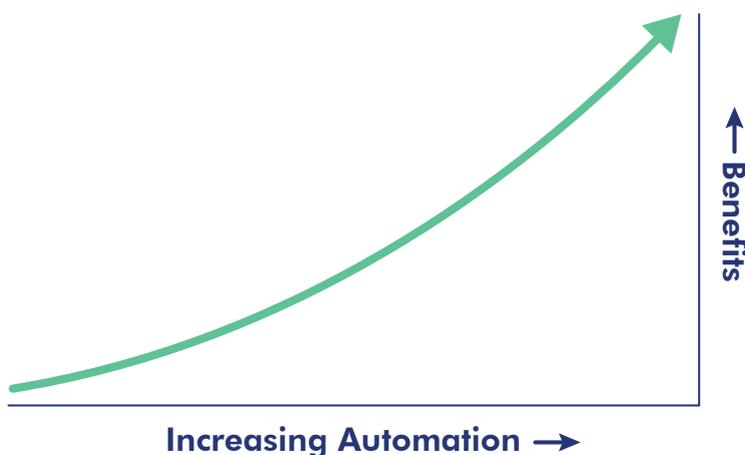
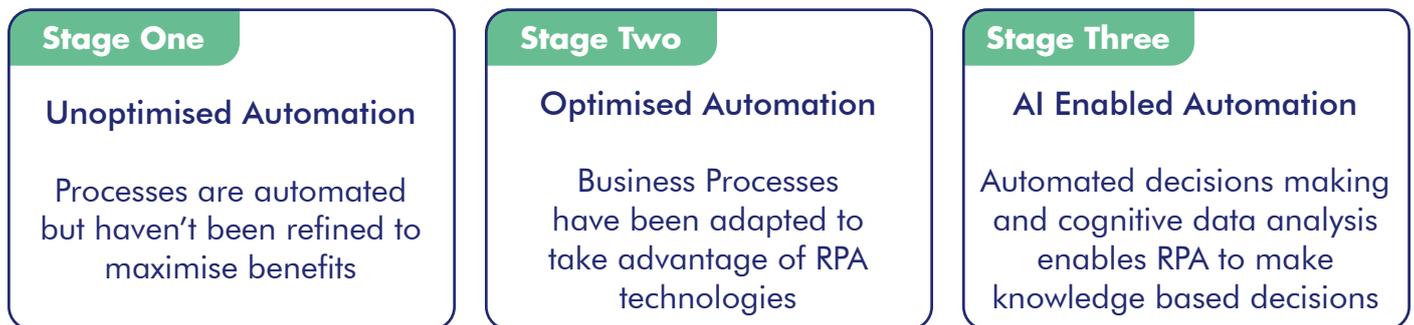
Technology's ability to move us forward at ever-increasing speed and ease has been a defining feature of the last 30 years in the public sector and beyond. The transformation of ICT from a function that feeds and waters infrastructure and applications is well underway, and we all expect a greater deal of autonomy, control and influence over how technology works for us.

Our ability to squeeze more productivity out of less infrastructure is returning fewer gains than in previous years, with the rise first of virtualisation, then public cloud infrastructure and SaaS (Software as a Service) solutions, there are well worn paths to achieving efficiency. But what happens once that journey is made?

The ability for computers to automate tasks is nothing new, scripting of processes and transactions has been around since computers were first deployed into businesses. What has changed is the ability for us to start making data-led decisions at a much faster rate using a combination of Machine Learning and RPA (Robotic Process Automation).

## The Three Phases of Automation

At Cantium, we see the path to automation within a business following three phases:



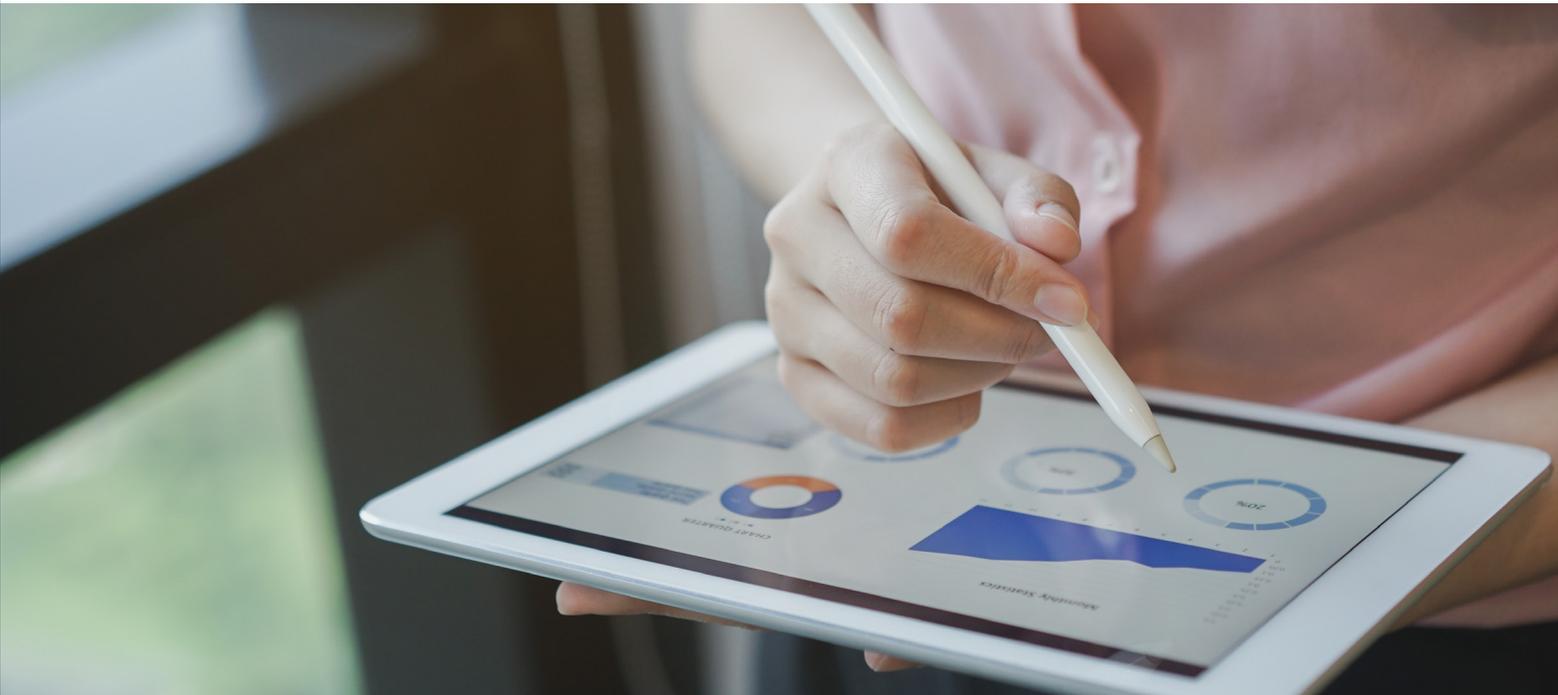
Even from a pure RPA perspective across stages one and two, most businesses can expect to see a benefit of time returned and increase in productivity of over 50% per process automated. The key part of these phases is getting the data into a structured format that can be processed in a repeatable way. This will begin to change the way staff interact with their systems and will require them to work in a different way to drive further efficiencies.

This is where Machine Learning and cognitive AI functionality comes to the fore.

## Building Business Intelligence in Real Time

A few years ago, the rise of the term “Big Data” was seemingly unstoppable. Organisations clamoured to aggregate their data onto expensive and often underutilised platforms to try and eke out insights into how they could be more efficient. But with Big Data comes a big headache - how do you analyse and draw insight from that data and then act on it before it has become stale or out of date? Many a programme failed to live up to the anticipated benefits, with these data warehouses becoming little more than an expensive and hard to manage backup platform.

Enter Machine Learning, cognitive AI and RPA. Structured and unstructured datasets can now be analysed and patterns defined within days of deploying toolsets to bring that data to life. The ability for the right tools to trace processes and outcomes through an organisation is breathtaking. What’s more, once business intelligence and a level of automation is applied, decisions can be presented to a business to be made in near real time and at a fraction of the cost.



Most processes within a business function operate on the basis that data is entered, data is analysed and a decision / outcome is then processed. These processes often have a limited set of outcomes, only some of which require a complex decision to be made. By analysing the underlying data and observing the outcomes over time, machine learning of a process will quickly identify a predicted outcome for each instance of the process. Then, through the right toolset, present the data to a responsible person for the outcome to be enacted. RPA can then take over the delivery of the process where appropriate, or the process can branch out into the real world for further analysis. By working in this way, employees are able to increase their own productivity and focus on cases that require human interaction and decision-making outside of the system.

Of course, the implementation of these technologies relies on the right ingredients being in place:

1. **A good understanding of current processes and their costs**
2. **Digital skills to deliver and budget**
3. **An agreed strategy that automation will be deployed within the business**

A digitally enabled workforce supported by an effective RPA strategy is a must for any organisation looking to stem the ever-rising requirement and cost for staff to deliver these processes. This reality plus increased competition to hire across all sectors means organisations are increasingly turning to partners to automate processes that would otherwise need to be fulfilled by skilled individuals that would be cost prohibitive to hire into the organisation.

By leveraging the economies of scale provided by these partners, organisations can deliver automation in a sustainable and cost-effective way.

The ability to deliver automation effectively needs to rely on a different model to truly make an impact. Organisations are all keen to reap the benefits of automation and the improvements that it brings. Time, cost and quality are metrics that we are all responsible for measuring and improving as part of our service delivery.

All too often however, there are forces at work that can hamper the realisation of our goals - resistance to change is amongst the strongest of these and requires careful management to overcome. All too often expectations are set high by the promise of end to end automation of a business, resulting in unrealistic savings and the digital skills gap means that the right resources are hard to find and expensive to employ.

## Utilising RPA to Deliver Success

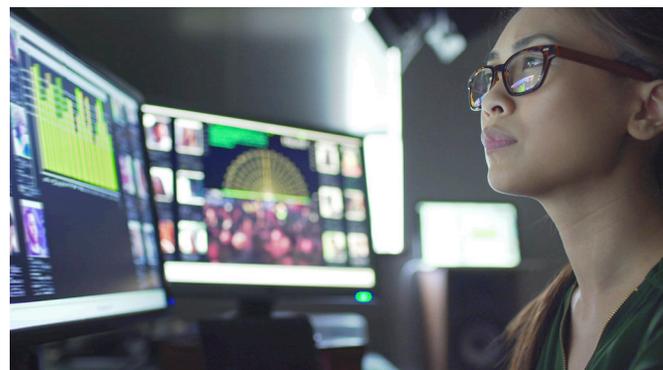
So how do we deliver success? Cantium's experience has led to three key findings that ensure automation and digital transformation are approached in an effective way...

1. A full end to end understanding of every process in the business is not required to start getting benefits from automation. An exercise to identify the right opportunities needs to be carried out to identify processes that are suitable for automation and will have a measurable benefit to the organisation. This is an effort that ideally should be crowdsourced from across the business. Putting in place an effective route for innovation and ideas is a critical success factor.
2. The right controls and governance executed by the right team are crucial to success. Many organisations operate a centre of excellence model by drawing on expertise from across the business to deliver effective change. By working virtually across organisational boundaries into a centre of excellence, the central prioritisation and management of automation delivery means that dependencies are mapped, and benefits are reported business wide, reducing the impact of working in silos. Service specific knowledge is required for getting the most out of automation and the route into the delivery team must be as easy as possible.
3. Incentivising employees to deliver automation and demonstrating that RPA benefits them in their current role is a balancing act that requires careful management. It's key to demonstrate how RPA can make service delivery more efficient and to offer employee rewards for bringing automation ideas to the business. A clear map of how roles will change as a result of automation is a must to keep up to date.

The automation lifecycle follows the same pattern no matter the size of the process. The centre of excellence is responsible for identifying and assessing the processes across the business, meaning that each process is tested according to the same method before automation is implemented.

The continual review and measurement of automated processes is crucial to ensuring that the platform continues to deliver benefits. Careful management and monitoring of automated processes once implemented is also required. As the business changes and new services are added, automated processes can be impacted in unexpected ways, with the business relying on more automation to deliver processes, any issues can quickly have a big impact. There is a clear link between the delivery of these processes and the wider business architecture function, for which the mantra is test, test and test again.

Cantium has seen clear benefits of automation across its own processes and customer processes. There are several key areas common across most organisations that are suitable for automation in the back office, such as document handling and validation, reconciliation and reporting, form processing, HR tasks and financial management and audit trails.





## Automation in the Public Sector

So how can Cantium help to deliver automation in the public sector?

Our public sector heritage means we understand the challenges facing public sector organisations, including large budget cuts, digital skills gaps and too many competing priorities. Cantium can help to drive efficiencies and savings in public sector organisations through the delivery of whole automation lifecycles. We can provide resources and expertise across the automation lifecycle depending on where services are required.

Cantium is proud to be a Crown Commercial Services supplier. Many of our services, including RPA, are available for procurement on G-Cloud 11. Alternatively, if a bespoke solution or outcome is required then we are also able to supply through the Digital Outcomes and Specialists Framework through CCS.

G-Cloud 11 | Crown Commercial Service Supplier

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If you'd like to find out more about automation or any of our other digital transformation services, please get in touch at

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