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ROBOTIC PROCESS AUTOMATION EDITION

David Hasmüller,
CEO

ELBA TECHNOLOGIES

AN ENGINEERING PERSPECTIVE INTO RPA

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AN ENGINEERING PERSPECTIVE INTO RPA

By Royce D'Souza

> RATHER THAN BEING THE BIG MARKETERS OF RPA, WE HAVE REAL TECH DNA WITH A STRONG TEAM OF TRUE SOFTWARE ENGINEERS

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CEO

"We cannot predict the future. We can only try to understand the potential alternatives that future may or may not bring, as well as the factors which lead to those alternatives, and continuously reassess the direction in which we move, to adjust our business models to an everchanging environment" ***- David Hasmüller, CEO, Elba Technologies.***

Hasmüller's comprehension of the future of technology-driven businesses stemmed from his research at the ESB Business school in Reutlingen, Germany, wherein he was tasked to investigate the future of robotic process automation (RPA). His research primarily revolved around these four topics:

1. How can impacted stakeholders prepare on RPA-driven business process automation in the long term?
2. How may the practice of business process automation with RPA look like in 10 years (2027)?
3. The factors that influence the future of business process automation with RPA.
4. The relationship between those factors and business process automation with RPA.

These focal points connected the dots between RPA, its applicability, relevance in the industry, merits, and demerits, and the future scope and integration with technological platforms.

And, its derivatives not only shed light on the merits of RPA but also offer a different perspective into automation initiatives. The study directs us to a new perspective that goes beyond the traditional, consulting approach to RPA and ventures into the realm of engineers and software developers that have perfected this automation genre. "Rather than being the big marketers of RPA, we have real tech DNA with a strong team of true software engineers," substantiates Hasmüller. "Our clients bring the business and the domain knowledge to the table. We bring in the necessary technological tools such as RPA, along with the expertise in different operating models and the framework that one would need to apply those technologies." The CEO's words echo the shared ideology upheld by the Elba Technologies team, resonating an engineering mindset to the implementation of RPA technologies in the enterprise arena.

Engineers at Heart

Hasmüller emphasizes that efficient orchestration of RPA is all about

utilizing the right tools, having an adequate understanding of relevant concepts, and applying the combination of the two to achieve the desired objectives.

However, quite a few subject matter experts believe that the implementation of RPA can be carried out without engineers. As ambitious and promising as this idea may seem, such a reality is far from fruition. Though several of these players have matured into RPA centres of excellence with automation being an integral part of the company culture, they have stumbled upon two specific challenges. "Many RPA players have harvested all the quick wins, which are easy to find, and are now struggling to find further suitable candidates for automation. Likewise, they have grown their RPA platforms to a size where they cannot handle them anymore," explains Hasmüller. Elba Technologies takes a data-driven approach, rather than a consulting and discussions-based practice by bringing in desktop mining technologies, to discover these automation candidates.

Moreover, the company's vendor-agnostic approach to utilizing multiple RPA tools enables them to surpass the limitation of specific tools, thereby providing clients with a comprehensive overview of vendors they have been working with. This allows both the client and Elba Technologies to identify technologies that work well with the lifecycle of RPA processes, which connect with OCR, chatbots, ITSM, and many more relevant tools that would supplement RPA. This merit alone serves as a testimony to Elba Technologies' capability of working with multiple vendors to piece together solutions that integrate with RPA. Such a data-driven approach empowers clients to rethink their automation strategies—even beyond RPA—and to the discovery and assessment of automation candidates. "What our clients tell us is that if we hire you as experts, we do not want to pay you for working out everything from scratch, but rather for bringing in the necessary assets, which become customized for the relevant implementations," adds Hasmüller. He goes on to state that the company strives to make the client self-sustainable through the course of an engagement, wherein, their reliance on Elba Technologies gradually decreases with the progression of time.

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The Groundwork to Noteworthy Partnerships

Elba Technologies' competencies in orchestrating such automation initiatives through exemplary tools such as RPA can be observed throughout engagements in various industries from Telecom through Financial Services and Facility Management to Energy.

The very first interaction with such clients is typically a small-scale pilot program alongside developing their Centre of Excellence (CoE), consequently training the clients' functional and technical roles and initiating the preliminary processes required for automation, as well as building the RPA platform and architecture. After such initialization projects, the groundworks for exponential growth of a CoE are laid out.

For some of their clients, Elba Technologies accompanies the growth of their CoE over the course of several years, supporting their maturation from a pilot team into a resilient automation and process excellence organization. In other cases, Elba Technologies along with their client and partners changed the work and engagement model by 180 degrees from traditional project delivery to an agile organization through and through, applying the scrum methodology across several workflows. In such projects, success rates such as 1 million automated transactions per year or work worth 100 FTE automated per year are realistic.

"One of the core enablers for exponential growth of RPA is a well-defined technical approach, that we initiate at the start of an engagement and that consequently leads to the creation of a broad assortment of automation assets," explains Hasmüller. The creation of these automation assets, in turn, leads to an increase in the speed and efficiency of implementation and a decrease in the cost of every additional process built on top of an automation platform. The base artefacts—which function as reusable components of development—allow companies to steer away from building additional processes from scratch. Reusability of this nature is owed to the design approach, wherein the base code is built into packages and libraries, similar to how code is developed in object-oriented programming. Such Engagements have not only enabled Elba Technologies to build credible partnerships but also bring forth an engineering perspective into the implementation of RPA across varied business domains.

RPA in the Intelligent Era

Elba Technologies' modus operandi falls in line with Hasmüller's research derivatives that indicate four plausible scenarios for RPA – based on several influential factors impacting the future of business process automation. The research further finds substantial evidence to support that RPA, in its current form, will not be progressive in the age of intelligent technologies. "Today, in 2020, three years after conducting that research, it is a suitable point in time to reassess whether we are moving into the direction of these consistent scenarios," emphasizes Hasmüller. Conclusively, the CEO's remarks resonate with the on-going developments and breakthroughs in Artificial Intelligence, which hint at the possibility of advanced intelligent technologies replacing RPA altogether in the near future, especially should a breakthrough in General Artificial Intelligence be made.

That being said, a paradigm-altering revolution in the area of general artificial intelligence has not yet taken place, with AI in its current state mostly being applied to the resolution of specific regimes such as pattern recognition, sentiment analysis, and natural language processing, to name a few. Though this hypothesis strengthens RPA's acceptance across a multitude of business process automation initiatives, there are still several avenues 'automatable with RPA.' To that end, Elba Technologies upholds desktop mining technologies to discover the aforementioned automation candidates and further enhance the value delivered through RPA.

Even in this hour of turmoil, with the enterprise world battling the widespread COVID-19 pandemic, automation can not only serve as a cost-efficient tool but also as a vital factor for business continuity in freeing up resources for mission-critical activities. At this juncture, Hasmüller reassures that RPA is a fast and non-invasive candidate in the automation arena, which can safeguard businesses from the destructive consequences of the pandemic. CA

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